

ALTURLIE

ROBSWOOD COOKE

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Alturlie

Alturlie

THE SAME BEING SOME PASSAGES IN THE
LIFE OF SIMON STUART OF ALTURLIE, SOME-
TIME OFFICER IN KING LOUIS OF FRANCE
HIS REGIMENT OF PICARDY, AND LATER
MAJOR OF HIS BRITANNIC MAJESTY'S
REGIMENT OF FRASER HIGHLANDERS

THESE NOW EDITED BY

H. ROBSWOOD COOKE

TORONTO
MUSSON BOOK COMPANY
LIMITED

Made and Printed in Great Britain.
Hazell, Watson & Viney, Ltd., London and Aylesbury.

TO

SIR COLIN MACRAE

CHIEF OF THE CLAN MACRAE

2134759

OF

THE CIVIL SERVICE

AND THE PUBLIC SERVICE

1885

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*I In which Something is Told of Alturlie and
How I Came to Leave It*

IN all that I have read or heard men say in talking about the late civil war in the land, nothing is more remarkable to observe than the way the simple truth can become twisted about, with here and there something added out of the invention of each teller, so that in the end, men with difficulty recognise either themselves or what they did in hearing the latest telling of it.

There is the part played by my lord the President of the Court of Session in that woeful and ill-advised adventure. And the construction placed by certain people in the North here upon his work. Some going so far as to say my lord was a traitor to his own countrymen and to his rightful sovereign.

I have had the honour to persuade several gentlemen who should have known

better, to see his labour in the true light ; yet a man cannot be everywhere, neither can he go through life ramming the lie down the throats of all who give it out.

This has been borne in upon me by my recent affair with Malcolm Chisholm of Clunes, Major of His Majesty's regiment of Fraser Highlanders. It would appear that the honourable and gallant major only repeated a piece of information of which he had no personal cognisance, but had received in all good faith from others. To my infinite regret—Major Chisholm being a brother officer, and a pretty gentleman who acquitted himself very well—this information only came to me after I had ran him through the ribs following a parry in tierce.

Pondering over the dilemma, I perceive, except I fling away the scabbard of my rapier, there is only one other, and that perhaps the best way, of countering a cruel slander on the memory of a fine gentleman, a true patriot, generous and

far-sighted beyond his day and generation.

So, having taken some personal and active share in matters connected with the uprising, more especially as regards events in the North, besides having the good fortune to render my lord a small service for which I was later handsomely repaid—and earning moreover, on one or two occasions, his recommendation, for certain commissions I had carried out to his approval—I have, agreeably to the desire of several gentlemen, set myself the task of putting down in writing my own personal knowledge of, and humble share in, these doings. That all may know the right of it, and so, it may be, help to keep the truth and the memory of brave men green in the hearts of those who come after us.

I confess at the outset a thing that will be readily observed—I am an ignoramus with the goose-quill. As for book-learning—my library is made up of my mother's

Bible, the Plays, very handy and neatly bound in brown morocco leather, of Will Shakespeare, wherein that man has set forth in the most pleasant manner all that can be said of all things. Maréchal Saxe, under whom I made two campaigns, his treatises on infantry in attack and defence, one or two more books of the same nature, and Cæsar, his *Commentaries*, done in English. Which last is just as well, seeing that "*Veni, vidi, vici!* *Via* a way, *mensa* a table, and *Amo Amas*, I loved a lass," is about all that remains in my memory of the Latin drummed into it with many's the sore leathering by McIntyre, the domini of the school at Petty; as hard a man as ever laid urchin face down across a form.

I have often thought a book commanding the interest of all thinking men could be written concerning the trifles that have altered the course of history. The cackling of geese on the walls of ancient Rome roused the sleeping sentries and thus saved

the city from the barbarian invaders. For lack of a horse a king lost his crown. In recent times vast quantities of wine were drank in honour of the little gentleman in the velvet coat whose industry put a period to the reign of his late Majesty King William.¹ And as it is with kings and empires, so it is with smaller men. A sharp thunder-shower of rain, one hot close night in the city of Paris, and later on the same night seated in a café reeking with the fumes of wine and tobacco-smoke, the desire for a breath of cool fresh air, were the trifles that set my feet on the first steps along a road very different to that which I had planned to travel, with all the consequences herein to be set forth.

And here will I humbly crave the indulgence of anyone who cares to spend a winter's evening over this history, what time some account is given of myself and the events leading up to that night in the

¹ King William was thrown from his horse by the animal stumbling on a mole-hill.

city of Paris. They may rest assured I will not take so long about it as does Mr. Sterne, whose book I am at present reading. Vastly amusing, with much diverting and learned chatter on life and men and manners ; but comically vexing in his distracting trick of bolting off the main line of march up some side-alley or another, and devilish long-winded, seeing that after reading three hundred and odd pages, by what I can make of it, he is yet concerned with the birth of Tristram Shandy, and the lamentable accident upon that occasion to the infant's nose.

When Prince Charles Edward his father made the attempt in 1715, my father's father was seized in his own right of the house and lands of Alturlie, which lie between the sea and the high road from Inverness to Nairn.

When that unlucky business came to an end on the field of Sheriffmuir—an affair to make the gods weep, and a battle the strategy of which I can make neither head

nor tail of to this day, and have come to think there was none—my father Simon Stuart, who had marched with the Mac-Intosh and the men of Moy, sorely wounded, made his escape with the help of a comrade named Ker in the yawl of an Aberdeen fisherman. Meeting a Dutchman at sea bound for Scheveningen, they transferred themselves from the yawl, and so to Holland and safety. There he married Jean, Belladrum's daughter, of which marriage I was the only child. When I was two years old my father died from the effects of that gunshot wound he got at Sheriffmuir, and Belladrum having died the year before, my mother got her affairs redd up in Holland and took ship with me to Inverness, where we were met by my grandfather, who carried us home with him to Alturlie. At Alturlie I passed out of pinafores, was breeched and sent to school, and grew up in the ways of the son of a highland landed gentleman until I was nearly eighteen, when two things happened

about that time which brought to an end my life there, and as heart-broken I thought, all that made life worth living. My mother, the dear gracious lady whose every thought and deed was love and care for others, died, and a week later, my grandfather, the kindly old man who loved us both, was found dead sitting in the great chair by his desk.

McRimmon, the Inverness lawyer, came to me on the afternoon of my grandfather's funeral as I sat in my mother's room staring blankly out on the sea, all heedless of the funeral company feasting below. And with him came my mother's uncle, Fraser of Clunes.

Gravely the two old gentlemen sat down, and after a few kindly words of sympathy from them both, says McRimmon, "I am very sorry it is my business to tell you, Simon, that a thorough search through the house, with the assistance of Janet, has not brought to light anything in the shape of your grandfather's will!"

“Weel, laddie!” said he, observing I was paying little heed “this has been a dreidful blow for ye, and I dare say this is no just the time, and ye’ll no’ be in the mind for talking ower business the day, but,” said he, patting me on the shoulder, “come in and see me in a day or two. Mind, I was the friend o’ your father, though I canna say the same for his brother, and I’m afraid ye will no’ find him just exactly the soul o’ generosity nor, I fear, even inclined to do the fair thing by ye!

“And if things go the way I’m thinking they will from what I know of him,” said Fraser, “always keep in mind I have neither wife nor bairn. Ye are welcome to Clunes and all that’s in it for the sake o’ her that’s gone. So when the time comes, just pack up and take the west road!”

The house was like a grave for a day or two after the funeral, and I mooned about from room to room, or sat on the beach

unable to settle my thoughts to any work. But except to those near and dear to them, the dead are soon forgotten. Empires may fall and kings may die, but the cows have to be milked. The work of the house and the farm went forward, and the laugh of a serving maid joking with one of the farm lads jarred me like a blow.

As for the future, distracted by grief, I had so far hardly given the matter a thought.

Well, if I had no plans for the future, I was soon to find that my uncle James had so far as Alturlie was concerned. This gentleman, my father's younger brother, managed that part of my grandfather's estate, known as the lands of Petty, and his name for avarice and hard-bargaining was a byword in the country-side. In all but one respect. To his children, Joan, a lassie of fifteen, and Malcolm a year younger, he denied nothing.

James Stuart was a widower who had married late in life. He was now over

fifty years of age, but looked older. A short, dry, weazened man, with some twist in his nature that was always taking him the roundabout way of saying or doing anything. I have heard my grandfather say, when he was told of some piece of trickery, that though the front door stood wide open, James would go to a deal of trouble to sneak in at the back, and there you have a picture of him.

On the fourth day after the funeral I came in from an aimless ramble along the beach to find him waiting for me.

"I'm thinking, Simon," said he, when I was seated, "that it is time now for us to come to an understanding."

He paused for a minute, but as I remained silent, he sat licking his lips, fingering his chin, and darting little glances here and there like a man casting about for some way of tackling an unpleasant job.

"Did you ever," he said at last, "have any talk with your mother that is gone,

poor soul, or my father, God rest him, as to your future? ”

I shook my head.

“ It’s a peety.”

He drummed on the table and shot a glance at me under his heavy eyebrows.

“ It’s a peety, and it’s high time ye was thinking aboot it, for ye see I’m thinking aboot making some changes at Alturlie ! ”

“ You are going to make some changes here? I don’t understand you, sir ! ” said I.

The truth is, at the moment I had clean forgotten about no will being found.

“ Well, ye see, I’ll be moving into the house in a day or two, and though y’are welcome to bed and board with us, I was thinking that a smart lad like yersel’ would hardly be thinking o’ spending his days idling aboot Alturlie.”

“ I am still in the dark about these changes,” said I, faintly disturbed at the man’s manner, “ and I don’t understand

you saying I will be welcome to bed and board in my grandfather's house ! ”

“ Come ! come ! ” said he, perking up and rapping the table with his bony knuckles. “ Y’are no so thick in the head but ye must know that Alturlie is mine now, and it is your home just as long as I please ! ”

“ But my grandfather has made provision,” said I.

“ D’ye know of any ? ” said he, peering sharply at me across the table.

Only then did I remember McRimmon’s words after the funeral, and I sat bewildered.

“ Ye better see McRimmon ; he might know of something ; but if he does, he never mentioned it and I spent the morning with him.

“ I will be stepping,” said he, rising and putting on his old cocked beaver. “ I’m no for hurrying ye, but while things are being redd up at Petty, ye might set on your thinking-cap. I would like to know

what ye intend doing for a living. Ye see ye are no use to me in the minding o' the estate. The way ye employ your time stravaging about wi' dogs an' guns is no to my way o' thinking. And while I am about it"—he was in full tide now—"I micht as weel tell ye, that while ye stay here, ye will stop colluging wi' they lads from Moy and west the Beaully road. A pack o' idle brainless deevils. Honest work would set ye better. Culloden was speaking to me about ye the last time he was north. There's some o' ye merching up a road that has a gallows at the end o' it. And ye'll stop daidling wi' Joan, and Malcolm. I'll no' have ye stuffing their heids wi' a pack o' ould wives' tales o' ghosts and bogles, and stories o' the ould Stuart kings and plots. The Stuarts are ower the sea. The deevil take and keep them there!"

The old fox had worked himself into a passion which I dare say went some way to soothing his conscience for turning me

out of house and home, but I hardly heard a word of his harangue.

He stood looking at me for a moment, then turning on his heel he walked out of the room, and presently I heard his pony trotting down the road.

Only one thing I clearly realised, trying to come to some decision as to what I should do. Alturle was no longer my home. And looking round the pleasant room where everything spoke of my mother's pretty task, or through the window at the trim bowling-green flanked with flowerbeds, that was the old man's care and pleasure, I knew I was taking farewell of them.

There was a knock at the door and Janet entered, her comely face drawn with grief. Janet was my grandfather's house-keeper, a good-looking woman, wholesome, buxom, and still on the sunny side of forty. She had been my nurse, and looked upon me almost as a son, I think.

"Eh, my dear!" she said, "are ye no'

hungry wi' no' a bite in ye're stomach since morning? Come ben the hoose, an' try an' pick a bittie fish, or a lamb's chop that I've gotten ready for ye ma'sel', an' a dish o' tea, newly masked; come noo!"

She set me at the head of the table, and taking a seat beside me poured out a little glass of spirits. "Take that off, dearie, it will give ye an appetite," said Janet, coaxing me to make a meal.

"Ah me, the day," she said, dabbing her eyes with her apron, "that ever I should live to see the like. It will be changed days at Alturlie wi' James Stuart maister in it. Ye're old nursie has gotten her merching orders, though I told him he needna have bothered himself!"

"Are you leaving Alturlie too, Janet?" said I.

"Aye, am I," said Janet. "What would keep me at Alturlie noo? I couldna live in the ould hoose wi' ye all gone. It would break my heart, that's near broken

already wi' all that's in it. What did the ould deevil say to ye, laddie ? ”

“ He practically told me to go, Janet. There is no will.”

“ I know, I know, but I canna understand it, Simon. It's enough to make your grandfather turn in his grave. It was never in his thoughts, you that he was that fond o', to be turned out on the road-side. I would take my oath on my bended knees he never dreamed of such a thing, but if there's a drawer or a corner o' this hoose I've no' looked ower, I would like to know where it is !

“ Are ye sure, laddie, it's no' among ye're mother's papers ; there must be a will somewhere ! ”

I shook my head. I was sorry to destroy the faint hope in her voice, but I had spent a dreary morning looking over the contents of my mother's desk.

“ And where are you going, Janet ? ” It was an added burden to my grief, that she who had nursed and petted me ever

since I had come a babe to Alturlie should be turned away.

“Och, A’m no thinking about ma’sel’, laddie. I hae plenty to do my turn, and my sister in Cawmelton will be glad to gie me a corner in her hoose! Will ye no’ come and stop wi’ us, where ye will be as welcome as the floors in May, till ye see what’s to be done? Or will ye be for ye’re mother’s brother at Clunes?”

“Nay, Janet,” said I, “thanking you for the offer and for all your love and kindness, but you see except for a little money of my mother’s, I am penniless. So I must be up and doing, and that before another day passes!”

I sat for a while on my bed that night, thinking bitterly of the change in my life, but in a little, better and kindlier thoughts prevailed. I was young and strong. I would go forth into the world with all its adventure before me. I would go to France, where I would find men who knew my father. Louis the king had need of

men ! I would take service with him, like many another from the highlands.

So resolved, my thoughts rambling far ahead, as is the way of youth, I moved quietly about the rooms making my preparations.

Before I laid down to sleep for the last time in Alturlie I had made ready for the road. I wrote a few notes of farewell to be delivered after I had gone. My mother's papers I locked away in her desk along with her trinkets, as I purposed sending the furniture of her room away with Janet, only keeping out a brooch for her, and a pretty emerald ring of my mother's for Joan, and my fowling-piece I put aside for Malcolm with a note of farewell stuck through the trigger guard.

About noon of the next day, having seen Janet off with the carrier—a sore business this—and hurt she was because I refused the purse with half her savings, I rode up the lane for the last time, glad it was over. Turning into the road for

Inverness, I had started the pony into a trot, when I heard the sound of a horse coming at the gallop, and looking back saw it was Joan.

“What is this?” she cried, reining in abreast of me. “You are going away and never telling me, or saying good-bye! Oh, Simon, that you would do such a thing!”

“I left a little message for you and Malcolm at the house, Joan, and I thought your father would tell you!” said I.

“Never a word of this have I been told till I came to Alturlie this morning, and I think it was the least you might have done, Simon, your own cousin, to go away like this and never a word of good-bye!”

Then, seeing me so downcast, said she, “I think he is a very hard, cruel man, that ever I should say the like of my own father. Alturlie is as much yours as his. Such a thing to do!”

“Come,” said Joan, getting off her

pony, "sit with me here on the bank and tell me everything."

The afternoon was half spent when that talk ended, with me telling her the somewhat hazy plans for the future I had mapped out.

"But you will come back, Seum¹?" she said, as we stood holding one another's hands by the roadside.

"I will be always looking forward to that day!" said I.

"And you will not be forgetting me and all the happy days, off there, across the sea in France?"

"How could I ever forget my little playmate?" said I. "The hardest thing I have ever done, now all is past with me at Alturlie, is saying good-bye to you!"

"I will always be thinking of you, Seum."

Thus we stood for a little, looking at one another in silence. The tender-hearted little maid! My eyes were beginning to fill, and Joan, plucking her hands from

¹ Gaelic for Simon.

mine, put her arms round my neck and kissed me on the lips.

It was the first time we had ever kissed one another like that, and a great lump came in my throat.

“Good-bye, Seum,” she whispered, standing off in the road, her face flushing, and her dark eyes brimming with tears.

“Good-bye, Joan!” said I. And so I left her, and rode on to Inverness with my chin on my breast.

II How I Came to Paris and What Befell Me There one Night

THAT march to Inverness on a summer day in the year 1737 was the first of many marches that took me over France and a great stretch of Europe. Over three stricken fields, a score of skirmishes and onfalls, and at last, after eight years of campaigning, to this city of Paris.

About the hour of ten, on the night of the 8th of July, 1745, a date, as will be seen, I have good cause to remember, I, Simon Stuart, lately Captain of the Regiment of Picardy, had resolved to offer my sword to the King of Spain, whither some Scottish gentlemen of my acquaintance had already gone, to take service under Marshal Gage, and where it was likely an experienced soldier would find plenty of work to his hand. I was returning to my quarters from the post-house, whither I

had sent my baggage and paid my fare in the diligence, setting out for Marseilles in the morning ; and the reason for the sudden change in my affairs may shortly be told.

The battalion was in garrison at Lille, and upon a night at mess, when I dare say the wine had got a little the upper hand, the talk turned upon the recent battle at Fontenoy, and the part played in that action by the Jacobite battalions. A touch-and-go affair for Saxe, I thought !

“ I will wager ten livres the *maréchal* thanked his Maker he had those same Jacobite battalions to call upon that day ! ” said I.

At this *de Morville* took upon himself to raise a titter at my expense with some words anent the national characteristic displayed in the magnitude of my wager. I might have passed it as a joke, being fond of one myself, and a man slow to take up a quarrel ; but this purse-proud gentleman had so contrived, upon more

than one occasion, to make himself obnoxious to officers who had little beyond King Louis' pay to serve their needs.

So, when the joke, such as it was, had done its turn, I leaned across the table, and said I, "Monsieur, a poor Scottish gentleman in the service of His Majesty King Louis has the best of reasons for exercising care in the expenditure of his silver. Those reasons, however, I would have much pleasure in showing you, do not apply to his steel!"

Had de Morville's wound proved fatal, he being the son of a great noble, with powerful friends at his back, it might have gone hard with me, owing to the recent army orders on duelling. As it turned out at the court martial, a great to-do was raised over the words I had used. They made it a case of lese-majesty, and I was requested to resign my commission.

The 8th of July, 1745, in the city of Paris had been a day of blazing heat, and the night fell close and sultry, the sky

banked with heavy blue-black clouds. As I came up the Rue St. Jacques, the street was lit up by a blinding flash of lightning, a splitting crash of thunder crackled like a discharge of musketry and rumbled along the sky. I felt several smart taps on my hat, and before I had taken another dozen strides down came the rain in a deluge.

Having no cloak and a cat-like aversion to getting wet, I stepped off the street into the shelter of an archway until the shower should pass over. Almost opposite the archway stood the Botte d'Or, which café, besides providing an ordinary within the means of a poor officer on leave in Paris, was a regular exchange for all the news and rumours of war up and down the earth. It was here I had heard the news that decided me on going to Spain. Also it was the rendezvous of all the Jacobites in Paris, and where lately I had heard much talk of another expedition against England then fitting out at Dunkerque.

As a man will, I stood in a muse watching the teeming rain and the torrent rushing down the kennel, and my thoughts turned on the Jacobites and their endless intrigues.

It would seem some evil fate hung over the fortunes of the Royal Stuarts in their attempts to win back the throne of their fathers. The very elements fought against them. A year ago we heard the news of the great expedition of 15,000 men gathered at Dunkerque for the descent upon England. All was in readiness for the embarkation of the troops, and then came the news of a great storm in the Channel on the very day of embarkation. The ships were scattered and driven ashore with immense loss of munitions of war, many soldiers were drowned, and the whole scheme confounded and brought to naught. Maréchal Saxe, they said, was back in Paris and the expedition abandoned.

Riquez was doing a roaring trade that night. From the open door, a wide bar of light streamed across the street through

the pelting rain. I could hear the chorus of a marching song, and the loud calls for wine from the company within.

Standing there, impatiently waiting for the rain to cease, and listening to the racket across the way, my attention was caught by the antics of a little man dressed in black, in the hall within Riquez's outer door. It would appear that the fellow desired to enter the saloon, yet could not make up his mind to do it. Several times he advanced timidly and laid his hand on the inner door. He would push it open a little way, peer in and then shut it and fall back. Suddenly the saloon door was flung open in his face, a loud burst of laughter came from within, and two or three men, a good deal the worse of wine, staggered into the hall.

This decided the little man, for he instantly turned tail and ran to the outer door. Looking hurriedly up and down the street, he caught sight of the archway, and darting across, came to rest in front of me.

“ Peste ! ” he muttered, scowling at the café, and shaking the rain from his hat, “ I will return in the morning.”

“ May I ask your trouble, my friend ? ” said I.

Timid as a rabbit, he turned swiftly and leapt back a pace or two. He cast a frightened glance at me, then reassured by my appearance as I came out to the light, he thrust his hand into his bosom, and said, “ Monsieur, I carry a letter addressed to a gentleman at the Salle d’Escrime, of Marignan, Maître d’Arms ! ”

“ The school is closed for the day, hours ago ! ” said I, pointing with my cane to the row of dark windows above the Botte d’Or.

“ I was directed, Monsieur, to enquire for him at the café below, but I am a stranger to this part of the city, and Monsieur, I dislike entering that place, where they all seem to be drunk or mad.”

He was a meagre, elderly little man, a quill-driver or something of that sort, I

thought. "I am known to Marignan and a few of the gentlemen who attend his classes ; perhaps——"

"I am employed by Latour, the Military Costumier, and for the past three days, Monsieur, I have been searching Paris for this gentleman," said he, holding out a letter.

I took the letter, and holding it to the light, judge of my astonishment at reading, "To Simon Stuart, formerly of Alturlic in Scotland, and now officer in the Regiment of Picardy in France."

"Why, my man !" said I, "your search is at an end, for I am, or was until lately, Captain Simon Stuart of the Regiment of Picardy !"

"You are Captain Stuart ?" said he. "But, pardon, Monsieur, how am I to know ?"

"True," said I, giving him back the letter, "that is reasonable enough ; but come with me, I will soon set your mind at rest on that point !"

The shower having almost passed over, I took his arm, and together we crossed the street to the Botte d'Or.

Beckoning to Riquez, said I, "Jules, oblige me by telling this man my name."

"This is the Capitaine Stuart, Monsieur!" said Riquez, with a bow and a wave of his hand.

"A thousand pardons, and thanks!" said the little man. "Monsieur will be pleased to give me a receipt!"

I gave him what he required, and paid him for his trouble with one of my few remaining louis, and bade Riquez bring a bottle of wine to a little table where I could sit alone.

I turned the letter over, wondering who it could be from, for I had lost all touch with Alturlie since the opening of the last Austrian campaign.

It was dated the 16th of May, and tearing it open, I found two sheets within, reading as follows :

DEAR SIR,

By the will of your late uncle, James Fraser of Clunes, who died on the 10th instant, you are heir to his house and lands in the Parish of Clunes, with all stock, crops, and plenishings thereon.

It has been our pleasure to attend to all legal matters appertaining to the estate of the late James Fraser, and we would be pleased to know and carry out your intentions with regard to the same at your earliest convenience.

We are, Sir,

Your humble and obedient Servants
to Command,

McRIMMON and McRIMMON.

The other paper was also from McRimmon, divested of his legal cloak.

DEAR SIMON,

Trusting this will come to your hand with as little delay as possible and find you well.

I take great pleasure in congratulating you as the owner of Clunes. It is a fine property, and unless you find the service of King Louis more profitable—I confess I never heard tell of captains in his army making fortunes—you could not do better than come home and take it over.

This is the earnest wish of all your old friends, and among them, Simon,

Yours very truly,

JAMES MCRIMMON.

The letter fell from my hands, and my thoughts passed beyond the walls of the Botte d'Or to the land of my fathers. I saw, through the haze of smoke, the blue Firth embosomed among the great green and purple hills. The murmur of voices changed to the subdued roar of the waters among the islands, and the foam-tipped combers crashing along the weed-strown beach. Many a time I had dreamed that dream, in bivouacs under the starry skies, on long weary marches, or halts by the

wayside; some little thing, as the call of a bird or the scent of a plucked wild flower, would stir the old memories. Old times, old scenes, old faces, all would then come back to me, and like some haunting melody in a piece of music, through the dreaming would run the memory of Joan. And despite the years that had flown, the picture was ever of a merry, tender-hearted, dark-eyed maid, with a wealth of glossy brown hair falling about her shoulders or whipped about my face by the sea breeze, as barefooted we raced together along the beach, on the edge of the tumbling, hissing waves. Never of a Joan grown to womanhood would I permit myself to think, for with that would come the thought of some other, taking the place of a Simon Stuart forgotten, or, if now and then faintly remembered, then only as a playmate of school-days.

Heydey then! I would soon know if I were forgotten, for now I was going back to Joan and the old place. Of that there

was no question in my mind, only the means were lacking. To be sure I could write to McRimmon for money, but highland pride baulked at revealing to him how poor I was. Yet in all this great city of Paris I knew not where I could borrow ten louis.

Heigh ho ! I looked up. Every table had its little group of patrons. The hour was getting late and the clatter of tongues was like to deave a man. The air of the room was heavy with the heat that close sultry night, and the reek of wine. The tobacco-smoke hung over all like a blue haze, and at the memory of winds blowing off the sea, and cool shady woods and glens, a sudden scunder took me at the place, and I desired, above all things, a breath of fresh air.

Pausing at the door for a moment, debating which way I should walk, a waft of cool air on my heated face, blowing down the street from the river, decided me.

It was a clear starry night now. I would stroll for a little by way of the Pont Neuf.

Crossing the bridge I walked as far as the Louvre, and there leaning on the parapet overlooking the river, pondered on this latest turn of my fortunes, and the change it had brought about in all my plans for the future.

I was roused from a pleasant reverie by the bell of the Palace Church above my head clanging the hour of midnight, and feeling cool and refreshed now, turned myself about.

Men have told me it was on such a close hot summer night these same bells of the Church of St. Auxerrois, striking the hour of midnight, gave the signal for the bloody massacre of the Protestants on the Feast of Saint Bartholomew, some hundred and sixty years ago. I have since thought it a little strange that their tolling should have sent me at that particular moment to seek my lodging.

I recrossed the bridge and had come to the end of a street leading down to the Sorbonne, a narrow lane between high

houses, whose overhanging upper stories almost shut out the sky, and very dimly lit at wide intervals by lanterns swinging from cords, stretched across the street. The hour being late, the streets were very quiet ; not a soul did I meet coming from the bridge, when at the moment of passing this opening, I was startled by a clatter of hurried footsteps and the clash of steel. I heard a curse that I could have sworn was English, and drawing my rapier, I ran down the street crying, " Ha scelerats ! "

Fifty yards along, the light of a lantern showed me a man down, over whom another stooped, busily rifling, while two stood on guard.

As I came up, the robber stood erect and sprang back in line with the other two, thereby escaping, with a touch on the shoulder, a thrust that was designed to end his career as a midnight assassin.

A glance showed me here were no common cut-throats, whose game was a few coins. Instead of taking to their heels,

they exchanged half a dozen quick, whispered words and advanced cautiously to take me in front and on flank.

“ You are bold villains ! ” said I, backing to the wall, “ one shout will bring every blade in Riquez’s here within three minutes ! ”

“ Your business will be settled in less time than that, you cursed marplot ! ” said one in plain English, and he came on a pace or two, crouched like a cat with the straight arm of the Italian fencing schools.

According to Maréchal Saxe, whom I will maintain, so long as I have breath or steel to draw, is the greatest master of his trade since Julius Cæsar, not excepting my lord Marlborough and the great Frederick himself, it is of the first importance, where possible, in the face of a threatened combined movement, to engage the enemy before his attack has developed.

I leapt suddenly for the shelter of a doorway to guard my back. This brought me within reach of the man on my right,

whose thrust I parried and returned with one that took him in the midriff. He staggered back and sat down in the street holding his stomach, setting up the most dismal howling, and crying upon all the saints.

More than once on some hard-fought field have I seen men crazed with the lust of slaughter do the work of naked savages, but I was now to witness a piece of villainy that turned my blood chill.

The glare of links shone at the end of the street, and seeing this, the tallest of the two, the one who had addressed me, stepped back.

“ This pig has brought the watch on us with his howling ! ” he snarled, “ and the jig is up for the present. As for you, my friend, I shall know you again, and if ever we meet I shall repay this with interest ! ”

Whipping round, he passed his rapier through the chest of the wounded robber, and in a twinkling he and the other villain had disappeared in the deep shadow of the overhanging houses.

I TURNED from the dead bravo to the man whose aid I had come to so timely. He had got himself to his feet, and leaning against a doorpost, breathing heavily, thanked me in execrable French.

“Are you badly wounded? what can I do for you, my friend?” said I.

“An Englishman,” said he, with what I took to be a note of suspicion in his voice.

“It’s long since I saw the heilan’ heather!” said I.

“If it’s heilan’ ye are,” said he, hurriedly, “I’ll be obliged if ye get me oot o’ this. A’m lost amang these kennels, and”—he nodded his head at the slowly advancing street patrol—“I have no wish to fall into the hands o’ yon gentry. Moreover I have a bit stab in the airm that needs seeing to, and a cloot on the heid that’s dirling it yet!”

“Come then,” said I. “My quarters are handy!”

Taking his unwounded arm and keeping in the black shadow of the houses we slipped softly away, leaving the patrol to make what they liked of the dead footpad.

Gaining the Rue St. Jacques, five minutes' walk took us to my quarters.

I lit a pair of candles, and then for the first time had a good look at my acquaintance with the broad lowland Scots tongue.

He was a powerfully built, active-looking man, a trifle above the medium height, dressed in black, from his beaver to his broad buckled shoes, all very plain but good material. Besides his cut-and-thrust sword, I saw the butts of a brace of pistols in the belt beneath his coat and wondered he had not used them. Indeed, there were one or two points about the affair that set me wondering. For the rest, his face was hard, deep-lined, and weather-beaten, with a steady pair of keen grey eyes set beneath heavy black brows. His age it would be

hard to say. He might be thirty-five, he might be fifty. A quiet, stark, resolute blade, as a man hard pressed might be thankful to have at his elbow.

“First let me look to your arm ; I have some skill in these matters !” said I, relieving him of his hat and coat. He suffered considerable additional pain rather than let me cut away his shirt-sleeve, which, stiff with blood, was stuck to his arm.

“It would be a peety tae spile the braw new sark. Seventeen hunder linen I paid twelve shillings Scots each for it and twa neighbors tae it, no’ a year syne in the Lawn Market in Edinborough !” said he with a grimace.

I washed and bound a slight but painful flesh wound, and saw to a lump the size of a hen’s egg on the back of his head. Then, learning he was hungry as well as thirsty, I placed in front of him the half of a great Strasbourg pie and a decanter of brandy, bidding him fall on, apologising

for the scanty fare, my landlord being abed at that hour of the night.

“ May you or I never hae waur ! ” said he, cutting himself off a generous helping of the pie and pouring out a glass of spirits.

I had been struck by the unshaken nerve of the man, and his cool quiet eye regarding me steadily as I moved about the room getting a basin of fair water and a bandage, and found myself strongly attracted to him. Within the hour he had stood in desperate peril of his life. He must have been suffering great pain, yet without a tremor of the hand he took off his dram, nodding his respects to me with a smile, and quietly went on with his food.

“ May you and I never hae waur ! ” he repeated, “ which kenning weel the road I am travelling, and if I’m no’ mistaken in your profession, is something o’ a vain hope, sir ! ”

“ Simon Stuart, late Captain of the Regiment of Picardy, at your service ! ”

said I. "From what you say, I gather you are a soldier yourself."

He had laid down his knife and fork at my name, and looked closely at me for a minute.

"No, sir, I earn my bread upon the waters, maistly," he added as an afterthought, "yet I micht ca' myself a sodger without getting oot o' sight o' the truth. I hae seen and taken my pairt in twa or three tulzies here and there in my time."

"Under these somewhat uncommon circumstances, and seeing we appear to be fellow-countrymen, though we come from different sides o' the Grampian Hills, may I ask your name and condition, and where you are serving?"

"You may, sir, and no harm done." He poured out a little brandy and drank it slowly with the air of a man pondering his answer to a weighty question. Setting his glass on the table, he looked up, and, said he, "Mr. Stuart, it is very likely I am owing ye my life, or short o' that,

certainly the saving o' certain matters o' the first importance, trusted tae me for safe gairding and delivery. A guid turn I am no' likely to forget in a hurry. But to be honest wi' ye, sir, and my business being what it is, before answering your very natural question, I will ask, by your leave, ane or twa mysel' ! "

There was no particle of offence in the man's manner or speech. It was plain his caution, and the predicament I had found him in, were the outcome of some uncommonly serious business. He might be the carrier of valuable treasure, but I guessed the business to be political, both from his appearance and speech, and Jacobite at that.

Knowing something of the great traffic in spies and messengers, Hanoverian and Jacobite, between Holland and France and Britain, and both parties watching like hawks to waylay one another, that would explain the murderous attack upon him.

“ Fire away with your questions ! ” said I, laughing heartily at his lowland Scotch caution—would to the Lord we had some of it in the North. “ Mine is the natural curiosity aroused by meeting you in circumstances which you will admit were something out of the ordinary. If you would prefer it so, rest here for a few hours, and when you feel like moving off, we will just shake hands and say no more about it ! ”

“ That is the word of a man after my own heart ! ” says he, “ but I wouldna wish to pairt wi’ ye like that, Mr. Stuart, at all, at all. Indeed, sir, I have a thocht that we are to be better acquainted. Here is what I would ask ye, but first of all, my name is Ker—James Ker, ye nicht ken it. I come frae Leith ! ”

I started up in my chair and looked hard at him. It was the name of a man I would have given a good deal to meet, but my James Ker would be an older man than this. I shook my head.

Ker leaned across the table, and said he quietly, "It would be strange, but stranger has happened. Micht ye, by any chance, be any relation to Simon Stuart of Alturlie, near the toon o' Inverness, the Simon Stuart that was oot in the '15?"

"His son," said I.

He smiled, and striking the table with his fist, said, "I have many's the time heard my old father, noo deid and gone, tell o' the fecht at Shirra Muir, and a Stuart, sair wounded that day, that got away wi' him in an Aberdeen fishing-boat!"

He looked at me still with a smile on his hard, weather-beaten face.

"Mr. Ker," said I, putting out my hand, "I have heard my mother tell that story, and by the way she told it, I know if it had not been for your father, mine would never have lived to tell the tale!"

"Or have a son to save my life on the streets o' Paris this nicht!" returned Ker, giving my hand a grip that made the fingers tingle.

“ It is a strange way to meet your father’s son, Mr. Ker, and the pleasure is not lessened thereby ! ”

“ Faith, Mr. Stuart, your pleasure is no greater than mine, I’ll be thinking ! ” said Ker, with a chuckle.

“ Did I understand ye to say that ye was a captain *late* o’ the Picardy Regiment ? ”

“ That is so ; I have left the service of King Louis.”

“ Ye’ll no tak it in the wrang way if I ask ye, Mr. Stuart, what is your business noo ? ”

“ No, there is no need for me to keep it secret. I have, within the last few hours, received a letter that takes me home to Inverness.”

Ker leaned back in his chair and gave a low whistle.

“ Is it no’ a strange thing,” said he after a moment’s silence, “ that, only for what happened this nicht, I would be a guid few miles by this on the road to

Inverness mysel' ? It would a'maist seem that you and I were meant to mak' the journey thegither."

" I would wish to make it in no better company," said I ; " but the truth is, I must kick my heels here in Paris until I get the means to travel with ! "

" And if it is a fair question, hoo lang nicht ye have to wait, Mr. Stuart ? "

" That I cannot tell. It may be days or weeks ! " said I.

" The business will be important, Mr. Stuart ? " said he.

" Aye," said I, thinking of the few gold pieces left in my purse, " important enough ! "

Ker looked at me a full minute, then filling two glasses, said he, " Ye needna wait another day, sir ! I will gie ye a toast, Mr. Stuart," holding out his glass. " I will gie ye the King, sir ! "

I smiled, seeing his hand above the water-jug.

" The King over the water if you like,

Mr. Ker!" said I, drinking the toast. "It would be strange if a man of my family could not drink to him, but that is about as far as it will go with me. You have heard the news from Dunkerque?"

"I have; all the world has heard tell o' it by this time, but there's anither day coming, and it is a matter you and I needna fash oorselves about the noo; we have other fish to fry," said Ker.

"Ye will be thinking, na doot, Mr. Stuart," said he, "that it wasna just the siller in ma pooch yon gentry were after?"

"I confess, one or two points about the affair struck me as being a bit out of the ordinary," said I.

"An' ye would notice," he continued, "that I was no' for making any bother wi' the patrol about it?"

"I tell ye, sir, for I ken a true man when I meet him, and I ken this gaes na farther, deil ha' me!" said Ker, striking the table a blow with his fist that made the glasses jump, "and deil ha' them that canna keep

their tongues between their teeth ; but, whatever way it is, or hoo they get to ken, there's never a move made on the board in this business but some blethering fool canna keep his tongue frae wagging, and so plans are brocht to naught. Men's lives are put in needless danger, and the whole thing has to be planned ower again ! ” He shook his head, and for a space stared at the wall with drawn brows.

At last, turning his steady gaze upon me, he said, “ See now, Mr. Stuart, I'll tell ye ; this is the way o' it. This business I am charged wi' was settled no' twenty-four hours gane by, an' look what's happened ? I'm set on in the streets, an' but for you, I'd be lying noo, a rifled corp in the kennel ; and it wouldna end there. I carry that on me that spells the wuddie for a dozen men if I had lost it. The warst o' it is, a'thing must be done quietly. I darena ask for protection. That would give the game away completely, and that Mr. Stuart, brings me to you !

“ I would ask no man to pit his hand in this Stuart business against his ain free will, but it would just seem as if providence was in it, meeting a man like yersel’ this nicht, and wi’ business taking him to the very bit I am bound for. I was never the man to pass a chance, and it would jist be fleeing in the face o’ providence to pass this yin. I have made my bargain, and gang I must, so I mak’ ye an offer, Mr. Stuart. Gie me your company and—I’ll no misguide ye—it may be the help o’ that bilbo ye are sae gleg wi’, as far as Dunkerque, and your charges to Inverness will be mine. The journey winna cost ye a bawbee ! ”

I liked the man, though I had a poor opinion of the game he was taking part in, and for reasons I have already mentioned, I was eager to be off, so, with little hesitation, said I, “ It’s a fair offer, and I see nothing to hinder me travelling with a fellow-countryman. I gladly accept for the sake of the company, and it saves

me waiting here, it might easily be, weeks."

If I had been blessed like the Brahan Seer¹ with the second sight, I might have taken a second thought before making that bargain; but not being able to look into the future, I could see no shadow of the gallows lying black across a ride to Dunkerque with Mr. Ker.

So we shook hands upon it and drank a glass together for good luck on the road.

"That being settled," said Ker—"an' I tell ye I'm a lot easier in my mind than when I set oot last nicht—we'll be the better o' an hour or twa's sleep. That couch will dae me fine, Mr. Stuart, if it's no' going to pit ye to any inconvenience."

The grey dawn showing through the window was dimming the guttering candles as I made Ker comfortable and went to bed myself; but I heard him snore long before I went to sleep.

It was nearing the hour of noon before I

¹ A famous highland prophet.

awoke, hearing Ker moving about, so dressing myself I went out to him. I would have had him to breakfast with me at Riquez's, but Ker would not hear of this.

"I have had my morning, and a bit o' that very guid pie, so I'll dae fine. Besides, the hoodie craws will be on the look-oot, and it wouldna dae for you and me to be seen thegither. Tell me, hae ye a back door tae your lodging?"

"There is one which leads into the Rue St. Jacques!" said I.

"Show me that door," said he, buckling his belt and taking up his hat, "I'll be leaving ye for an hour or twa."

"Hev' your saddle-bags a' ready for the road, a lad will call for them. Here is an address; on the chap o' six, time yersel' to be dandering past the door, that is a' ye have to mind!"

I let him out and he walked quickly up to the end of the lane. There he stood for a minute, looking about him, before passing out of sight in the crowded street.

AT the hour of six, sharp on the minute, following Ker's instructions, I walked slowly by the door of a house I knew, not a little to my astonishment, to be the residence of the Marquis D'Argenson, one of the great men about King Louis. A servant, evidently on the look-out for me, came out to the portico and beckoned.

I followed him across a great hall where half a dozen lackeys lounged, and up a wide handsome staircase to a gallery from which opened many doors and corridors. The man, who was dressed in black, and carried a little ebony baton like an usher, motioned me to wait here, and passing through one of these doors, closed it softly behind him.

I stood for a while admiring the grandeur and richness of the house. Here, on every hand, was the evidence of great

wealth, contrasting grimly with the terrible poverty of the street : a very noticeable thing in this fair land of France.

In a minute or two the usher came out and signed me to enter. Passing through the door, I found myself in a richly appointed room, and saw Ker in conversation with two gentlemen seated at a table.

The slim, elderly gentleman, dressed in black, with a tired, cynical look on his pale face, I knew very well. It was said of the Marquis D'Argenson that he strongly advocated France helping the Jacobite cause, not for any great love of the Jacobites, but rather, it was suspected, because through them he could embarrass the English Government. At the sight of him the thought came to me that I was getting in deeper waters than I had bargained for—a thought that strengthened when I recognised the other gentleman dressed in the gay uniform of the Royal Scots Regiment in the service of King Louis. There were very few among the exiled

Scots who did not know Lord John Drummond, the man who was to have led a force composed of his own regiment and the Irish companies had the Dunkerque disaster not brought the Jacobite plans to naught.

He came forward and shook me warmly by the hand. "I knew your father very well. I remember him as a brave gentleman, and I am glad to meet his son!" He turned to the marquis. "A fellow-countryman, your Grace, whose father fought in the 'Fifteen!"

The Marquis nodded pleasantly, and rising, said, "I will leave you, my lord, to arrange matters with your gallant confrères." He bowed with a graceful gesture that included all three, and left the room.

"Ker has told me of your fortunate appearance upon the scene last night!" said my lord. "It is very evident, from this occurrence, some inkling of our plans has got abroad. This will entail some alterations."

"First of all," said Ker, "how many are

to be made acquainted wi' these alterations ? ”

“ It will not go further than we three sitting in this room. I will see to that ! ” said my lord.

“ That will be just as weel,” said Ker sarcastically. “ I am ready enough to tak a' risks, but A'm no' seeing my way to stake my life in an undertaking the enemy gets the wind o' the minute the plans are made. There's them here in Paris to-day, my lord, that would cut the throats o' fifty men to lay their hands on what ye charge me wi'.

“ D'ye ken, sirs, the leader o' the three men that set upon me last night ? The ‘ Whaup,’ no less ! ” said Ker without waiting for an answer.

“ A clever villain, that ! ” said his lordship. “ I have had word of him.”

“ Aye, clever, and a bauld yin,” said Ker, looking at me.

“ Did ye mark the taller o' the three, Mr. Stuart ? ”

“ Only that he was, as you say, a tall man, of the Italian school of fencing, I thought,” said I. “ It was too dark to see his face.”

“ I dinna ken aboot Italian fence,” said Ker, “ but the ‘ Whaup ’ is na Italian, but a Scot, and be damned to him. If ever ye meet a lang, skimpy, black-avised deevil, wi’ a lang neb, a bit ower to the one side, look oot for him. He wad bother the best o’ ye at Marignan’s ! ”

“ He will cool his heels in the Bastille, if hands can be laid on him ! ” said Lord Drummond.

“ Aye, if ! ” grunted Ker.

There came a little pause, then my lord turned to me. “ Ker has told you what business he is engaged upon, Mr. Stuart ? ”

“ Mr. Ker, I understand no more, nor wish to, is the bearer, at some risk I think, of letters to the North ! ” said I.

My lord nodded his head. “ He tells me you are of the honest party, which is what I would expect. Are you of the

mind to accept a post with us, Mr. Stuart ? ”

I was expecting this, and wished heartily he had not asked me.

“ My lord,” said I, “ I will be plain with you. Yesterday I was a poor man with naught but my sword, and very little money in my purse. To-day, by the death of a relative, I am by way of being in fair circumstances, and as a consequence, am not looking at the future in the same light. My bargain with Mr. Ker will be carried out to the letter, but beyond that, I am not, at this present moment, prepared to go ! ”

“ Devil take them,” I thought, “ this is going too far. I knew next to nothing of the present state of Jacobite affairs, but fine I knew the history of the 'Fifteen, with its tale of blundering, and heading and hanging, and forfeited estates. It was all very fine for these gentlemen pulling the strings in France, but I baulked at landing at home, a stranger almost, not

knowing how the land lay, and finding myself up to the neck in Jacobite intrigue the minute I got there.

“The Dunkerque disaster is not irreparable, Mr. Stuart!” said Lord Drummond, “only a delay. We will have great need of trained soldiers when the time comes; you would be invaluable to us, and there is no post, in reason, you might not aspire to!”

I offered no answer to this.

I believe his lordship divined what was passing in my head, for, clapping me on the shoulder, he said with a smile, “Well! well! Mr. Stuart, we will have to wait, I see, until the time comes when you will be convinced that the 'Fifteen is not to be repeated.”

“When do you leave?” said he, turning to Ker, who, during this conversation, had turned away to look out of a window.

“I am timing myself to leave a few minutes before the Port closes,” said Ker, coming back to the table.

“ Then until that time, if you have everything in readiness I would suggest that you stay here, and you will permit me to send in some refreshments !

“ I will leave you, Mr. Stuart, to plan with Ker your safest route to Dunkerque, and I wish you good luck and God speed ! ”

He held out his hand, “ If we do not meet again in France, I hope to meet you soon in auld Scotland, with the cause, Mr. Stuart, I believe we have both at heart on the path to victory ! ”

The day gave place to night ; a servant came in with candles and laid out a supper for us. When the time came we left the house, and walked to where Ker had the horses saddled and waiting under a dark archway, a short distance from the house.

The guard struck the hour of nine as we passed through the St. Denis gate, and took the north road on a clear starlit night.

*V Tells of Certain Gentlemen Interested in
 Our Ride to the Sea*

THE minute we were clear of the Port, Ker set the pace at a smart canter, but when we had travelled at this gait a trifle over a mile we came to where another high road crossed ours at right angles. Bidding me follow him, Ker wheeled short, and urging his horse across the ditch, rode into the black shadow of a clump of low trees and thick undergrowth standing a few yards from the cross-roads.

“Do you expect to be followed?” I asked, when I joined him in the shelter.

“From what I ken o’ them we hae to deal wi’, A’m prepared to expect anything. We will bide here a bit, and see. Mr. Stuart, it’s no’ to be thocht for a minute they gentry will let us get the length o’ Dunkerque without trying all they ken to stop us. Wheesht noo, and listen!”

All was very still, save for the gentle rustling of the leaves overhead in the night wind, but presently, looking back at the faint glare in the sky, from the lights of the great city, a familiar sound caught my ear.

“Is that no’ a horse?” said Ker, who had bent his head to listen.

“Horses,” said I, “and hard ridden!”

The distant patter, like rain drumming upon a wooden roof, rose to the roar of several horses ridden a gallop along the road we had come.

“Haud your horse quiet!” whispered Ker.

Following his example, I slipped from the saddle and held my horse by the muzzle as five horsemen swept up and reined in at the cross-roads.

We stood there in the dark watching them against the sky, pointing this way and that, what time they held a hurried consultation. But what with the fidgeting of their horses and the distance they stood off, we could make nothing of it.

In a minute or two they came to a decision, and putting spurs to their horses rode on again along the north road, at the same headlong gait, and presently the sound of hoofs died away in the distance.

“ I was expecting no less ; we will take the road to the right,” said Ker, as we swung into the saddles.

I confess I was already beginning to respect the brains that were working for his confusion, and said as much as we gained the road and set off again.

“ Ye will need to ! ” says Ker. “ Aye, they’re clever, ye may wager a’ ye have on that. Paris back there, fair swarms wi’ spies, and the English Government spends money like water amang them. Ye never ken, the very servants that brocht us our meat the nicht are as likely as not to be in their pay. But ! ” said he with a chuckle, “ they have never kepped me. Three times I have jinked them, and it will be queer if they trap the pair o’ us this time. And noo, if ye please, Mr.

Stuart, we will try the mettle o' these cattle, for I would like to be no far off Compiègne by the dawn o' day ! ”

The horses were sound beasts, in fine fettle, and knee to knee we pounded on through the short summer night, with short breathing halts, and to listen for any more signs of pursuit.

In the dark, we crossed the main road from Paris to the city of Soissons, and before the day was fully come, from the top of some rising ground, we could make out, in the light of the grey dawn, the spires of Compiègne by the Oise in the valley below.

It was not in the plans of Ker to show ourselves at any inn, or halt at any village or town at this stage of our journey. Against this, he had provided corn for the horses, and meat and drink for ourselves. At the foot of the hill, therefore, we turned aside and made for a piece of wood half a mile or so off the road.

Having rubbed the tired horses down, we

fed and watered them at a burn that ran down a little dingle in the wood. We made our bivouac just inside the edge of the trees at a point from where we commanded a good view of the road. There we passed the long summer day undisturbed, eating and sleeping by turns, and seeing nothing pass on the road but two or three country folks going or coming from Compiègne.

The horses and ourselves well rested, with dusk we set off again, and taking such by-roads as offered themselves, and pushing the horses hard, by dawn of the next day we came to Arras. Ker now feeling less need for precaution, we rode into the town and found a quiet *estaminet*, where we did justice to the first hot meal since leaving Paris.

We left Arras late in the afternoon, and having made careful enquiries along the road, and hearing of no company of riders passing that way, I was of the opinion that we had fairly given the slip to the pursuit.

To this, Ker, who I found was the last man to count his chickens before they were hatched, replied, "We may have, but I'll hear your opinion on that when we are snug aboard the *Gull* at Dunkerque!"

Before another dawn I was to find that he had not underrated the ability of the men we were trying to evade.

So far we had come by fairly good roads and in the best of weather. Now came a change. Our line of march lay more to the west; we had to make our way, if we were to avoid the main highways, by rude cart tracks and bridle paths that wound through woods, and led us in the dusk splashing through miry hollows and up and down dale until I lost all sense of direction.

So far I had been content to follow Ker's lead, without question of his knowledge of the roads, knowing by the stars we were marching north. But now the sky was overcast and the night dark as

the pit. For two hours we had been blundering along a rough track through thick woods. I doubt if we had come ten miles in that time. Finally Ker pulled up. "I'm thinking I'm off my road a bit, Mr. Stuart!" said he. "There should be an inn hereabouts, but in this mirk it is hard telling where we have gotten to."

While we stood trying to get our bearings, to make matters worse, there came on a steady drizzle of rain, and the first sough of a rising wind.

"Give the horses their heads; being on some kind of a track, it is likely it will lead us to a main road," said I.

We pushed on again at a snail's pace, with naught to break the silence but the pattering of the rain and the floundering and laboured breathing of the spent horses. At last, at the end of another mile, a faint whiteness showed at our feet, the horses hoofs rang on a hard road, and we saw a bar of ruddy light ahead, shining through the trees.

"Do you know what place that is?" said I.

"That will be the Bull's Head, the inn I was speaking of. I suppose we'll hae to ide there," said Ker, with what sounded like a lack of enthusiasm, considering the plight we were in.

For myself, I would have been grateful for the shelter of a woodman's hut in that hour. We dismounted in the light that streamed from an open door, and called to a man who stood there like a sentry on guard.

He came out, and finding it was our pleasure to halt there until the morning, carried our saddle-bags into the house. At his shout another man appeared on the scene with a lantern and led the horses away.

Now, the horse that I rode had served

me well, a stout-hearted, willing brute that would have gone on until he dropped ; so, leaving Ker to follow the landlord into the house, I followed the stable-lad to see the nags rubbed down, fed and watered and bedded.

I came back to the house with a piece of information for Mr. Ker that set us both thinking. Three other horses stood in that stable with the sweat of hard riding still on their backs.

“ You have other company besides us, to-night ? ” said I to the landlord when he came in, desiring to know our pleasure.

A lean, hard-visaged fellow, this, with the air of an old soldier about him—an impression I got from his straight back and a scar across his forehead that showed white against the dark skin.

He started at the question, but answered readily enough, “ No, monsieur, you are my only guests to-night.”

“ Whose horses are those in the stable, then ? ” I demanded.

“Horses!” said he. “Ah, yes, certainly, monsieur, they were left by three gentlemen who changed here this evening.”

“And which way did these gentlemen ride?”

“To Arras, messieurs; it was their desire to get there to-night,” said the landlord.

Seeing there was nothing more to be got out of him on that point, I ordered him to bring us food and wine, and showing us into a room that opened from the kitchen he went out, closing the door behind him.

We heard a hurried whispering in the kitchen and the outer door shut with a clang. In a little while came the landlord and set the table with a platter of fried eggs and pork chops, a loaf of bread and a litre of white wine. Learning there was nothing more we desired, he went out, and when the door closed, Ker, whose whole manner, ever since we entered the inn, was that of a man on the alert, listened for the landlord's retiring footsteps.

“ I would wager a trifle,” said he, “ that’s a lee aboot the horses, and no’ the only one he has told us this nicht !

“ ‘ To Arras,’ ” quoth he, “ mair likely from Arras. I’m thinking we have made oor first mistake in halting here, but if there is only three o’ them, besides that landlord and his man, we nicht mak’ it their mistake.”

“ You think the riders of those horses are after us ? ” said I.

“ Just that. I may be wrang, of course, but I have a thoct that we are no’ to get oot o’ this inn as easy as we came into it ! ” said Ker, his face set in a heavy frown.

He was not the man to express alarm without good reason for it, so I began to take stock of the situation. I tiptoed about the room, a low-roofed, fairly large chamber with two windows shuttered on the outside, that gave on the front of the house, and two doors, that leading into the kitchen, the other fast, and bolted, curiously

enough, on the outside. For furniture, two truckle-beds stood side by side between the windows opposite the kitchen door. The table, two or three chairs, and a clothes-chest—this last a heavy piece—I found, stood beside the bolted door; the only light we had was a brace of poor candles, that beyond the table left the rest of the room in semi-darkness.

Now, I am by no means a nervous man, but there were one or two circumstances about this Tête de Bœuf that troubled me. For the first, the house was steeped in a dead silence, and sign of a woman about the place there was none. A most unusual circumstance, this last, I thought, seeing that if there is one thing the traveller in France will remark about the inns of that land it is the racket and clatter of women's tongues that begins with cock-crow and continues throughout the live-long day until bed-time. What with the loneliness of the inn on the forest road, Ker's evident apprehension of mischief afoot, and the

room full of shadows beyond the candle-light, the place began to take on the appearance of a deadly trap.

I came back to the table, my mind full of stories of travellers waylaid and done to death in lonely inns, and saw Ker with his hand on the bottle of wine.

“Don’t drink any of that wine,” I whispered sharply, as his action brought a thought into my head.

He looked at me and drew back his hand.

“Ah, weel, it’s poor, soor trash, the best o’ it,” said he, and going to his saddle-bags came back with a metal flask.

“We’ll hae a nip o’ honest brandy then ; a man needs a drap to put heart in him in this unchancy den.”

We took a dram of the spirits, and then I filled the glasses to the brim with wine.

With a warning glance at Ker I crossed the room, and opening the door, called to the landlord, who sat alone, quietly smoking a pipe by the kitchen fire.

“We have finished our repast, we are

tired and desire to sleep. Have the goodness to clear the table," said I.

He came in, and watching him narrowly, I saw him look at the wine in the glasses.

"A glass of wine with us, monsieur, before we go to bed!" said I, placing one before him.

"It is an honour, monsieur!" said he, starting back with a smile, "but—but, I have a colic."

His hesitation resolved me. "There is nothing like a glass of good wine to cure a colic," said I, smiling at him.

His swarthy face paled beneath the tan at the sight of the levelled pistol. He grasped the tumbler of wine with a trembling hand and his eyes darted here and there like a trapped fox.

"Buvons!" said I, in a savage whisper, pressing the muzzle of the pistol against his heart, "jusqu'à la lie, mon ami." He emptied the glass, and when I lowered the pistol, made to leave the room. But I pointed to a chair. "Sit there!" said

I, pressing him into the seat. "My friend and I find your company entertaining."

It fell out as I expected. A glazed stare came into the villain's eyes, he slumped lower in his chair, and within two minutes we laid him insensible upon one of the pallets.

"Sharp work!" said I, grinning at Ker.

"Poisoned?" said Ker, who had looked on the play with amazement.

"Poisoned maybe, but I suspect the wine was only drugged," said I, "and taking one thing with another, it is likely those whose pay he is in are somewhere about this infernal inn."

We stood in the middle of the room whispering.

"What think ye we should do?" said I.

"There will be three o' them noo, an' that serving man is likely to be in it," said Ker, "but we dinna ken for sure, or where they are. The horses are well-nigh foundered, even if we could get at them, which is no' very likely!"

“ No, a’ things considered, I’m for holding the fort, just biding where we are till daylight ! ”

“ I am in the like mind, but we might try our hand at laying some kind of a trap ourselves ! ” said I, looking hard at the senseless landlord.

“ I take ye ! ” said Ker, as we moved noiselessly to the vacant pallet. With the bolster and pillows we made some rude resemblance of a figure beneath the coverlet. We pulled the coverlet beneath the landlord and flung it over him. With great effort and as little noise as possible, we dragged the heavy chest forward against the bolted door ; then, laying our pistols and swords to our hands on the table and blowing out the candles, we sat down to watch and wait what might betide.

Outside we could hear the rain beating in volleys against the shutters, and the swish and moan of the storm among the trees, but within the house was as silent as the grave, save for the heavy breathing

of the man on the bed, and now and then the dropping of embers in the kitchen fire.

Half an hour must have passed in that eerie silence, in which we sat on the alert watching the thin streak of light at the foot of the kitchen door, when the outer door was softly opened. Feet shuffled on the kitchen floor, and again silence.

"They're wondering what's come o' the landlord!" whispered Ker.

We heard a soft footfall and the bolt in the door behind us gently drawn. The door creaked as it was pressed against the chest. The footsteps went back to the kitchen. We could hear them whispering, then a stealthy foot crossed the floor, and someone called softly for "Pierre."

The steps returned, more whispering in the kitchen, then our door was softly opened and a head appeared. Very gently, inch by inch, the door was pushed wide, until the light from the kitchen fell full upon the beds.

Seated far back, we remained unseen, hardly daring to breathe.

“ Pierre has done the trick ! ” said he at the door.

“ In then, and make a finish of them ! ” called a voice, and at the word four or five men rushed through the door.

There was a flash of steel, and the muffled thud of blows fiercely struck at the figures on the beds, and then they found out their mistake.

“ Name of a dog ! Bring lights ! ” cried one, “ there is some cursed blunder. Here is Pierre done for, and the birds are flown ! ”

One or two rushed to the kitchen, returning with lights, and five very astonished villains stared open-mouthed into the barrels of four pistols.

“ The trick is turned ; throw down your arms ! ” I called out sharply.

Some ready rascal at the back cried, “ There’s only two, worth a hundred gold louis each, dead or alive ! ”

A heavy iron candlestick hurtled across the room. I ducked my head or the thing would have brained me, then came the rush.

We fired point-blank, and snatching up my sword, I heaved the table outwards and over, passing my sword through one ruffian sent sprawling at my feet by the overturned table. Turning to meet the next, I found the affair over. Less than five minutes had passed since they had rushed into the room ; three of the ruffians lay on the floor, dead or wounded, I stood barring the door against the other two, who fell back crying, " Grace, mes-sieurs ! "

" How is it with you, Ker ? " I cried.

" No' a scratch, and yersel', Stuart ? "

" The same," I replied ; " oblige me by strapping these rascals up. One move," said I, menacing them with my blade, " and I'll drive this through you ! " Taking their own belts, Ker bound their arms behind them.

I looked around the room, reeking with the acrid smell of powder, at the bodies of the three ruffians, two of them dead, another gasping his life out, and the landlord lying dead amid the disarray of overturned furniture, and marvelled at our easy escape.

Asking Ker to bring our saddle-bags, I ordered our prisoners into the kitchen, for I was minded to get some information from them.

Seating myself at the table, I bade them stand in front of me. They were both dour, hardy-looking villains, by no means common foot-pads, but well fed and well clad, their trade evidently a prosperous one. But I had questioned too many prisoners not to know the way of making such as they answer straight.

“Sit beside me, Ker!” said I; “but first of all, this is dry work, a glass of your brandy and a mouthful of cool water would not go amiss!”

I drank the spirits, and then, very de-

liberately loading and priming a brace of pistols, laid them on the table at my hand.

“ You carry the passport, Ker ; let me have it ! ” said I.

I opened the crackling document, and looking sternly at the prisoners, asked if they could read.

One of them said he could.

“ Then read that ! ” said I, holding it up to his eyes.

“ You will see that this gentleman and I ride on the King of France his business, that all men along our road are required to render us all needful assistance. Signed, you see, by the Marquis d’Argenson, the king’s Minister of State.”

I gave them time to ponder on that, then said quietly, “ Do you know the penalty for attempted murder of the king’s messengers ? ”

No need for them to answer that question. Their pale faces and wavering eyes told us they did.

“ See now,” said I ; “ we would be doing

right by blowing your brains out where you stand, but there is certain news we want, and from information we possess, we will know if you answer straight. The truth, and you go free, so far as we are concerned. One lie, and as sure as I sit here, at daylight we march you to Arras, where you will be **BROKEN ON THE WHEEL !** ”

“ Mercy, monsieur ! ” they both cried, “ ask, and the good God knows we shall tell the truth. ”

“ The Lord help you if you don't, ” said I.

“ How many of you left Paris to waylay us, and what were your orders ? ”

“ Twelve men, monsieur. When it was discovered that you had left Paris, we had orders to follow. One party taking the route to Beauvais, the second to ride straight to Dunkerque, and the third to Arras. ”

“ Who leads the party to Dunkerque ? ”

“ The ‘ Crane, ’ messieurs ! ”

Ker, who could understand well enough to follow all this, said, "That's the 'Whaup!' Ask him how many men ride to Dunkerque."

"Three, messieurs!" said the man.

I told them to stand back. "They will be waiting for us in Dunkerque, Ker!" said I; "but the road will be clear!"

"Once in Dunkerque," said Ker, "it will be easy to give them the go-by. The question is, what are we going to do wi' these birkies?"

"Leave them here trussed up. With the first peep o' dawn we'll be off, taking all the horses with us!" said I.

Going to the door, I looked out. The rain had ceased and a faint greyness in the east showed the dawn was at hand.

We found some bread and sausage in a cupboard, and when we had eaten and drank, Ker went out to feed and saddle our horses.

I turned to the prisoners and demanded

sternly where the rendezvous in Dunkerque was.

“ Les Trois Poissons ! ” answered one ruffian.

“ We ride to Dunkerque, where we shall lay your friends by the heels ! ” said I. “ We give you your chance by leaving you here ; make the best of it. But, as you value your bones, set your faces in any direction but north ! ”

It was now in the first hour of dawn and light enough to see the road, so, with no more time lost, we set out, driving before us the horses found in the stable.

Three miles along the road we turned them into a piece of open wood, where they found plenty of good grazing, and so on again at a sharp canter to the north.

We met with no further adventure on the road, and on the evening of the fourth day from leaving Paris rode into Dunkerque.

“ No inns for us in Dunkerque ! ” said Ker, “ but straight aboard the *Gull* we gang ! ”

The *Gull*, of which Ker was half owner with his brother the skipper, a large ketch, very trim and staunch, lay moored to a buoy, all ready for sea, in the outer harbour.

At the town gate we showed our passport to the officer on guard there, who readily came to the wharf with us and saw us safe aboard.

We sailed in the morning, and of the knot of idlers watching on the pier, doubtless some were there more than ordinarily interested in the *Gull's* two passengers. I confess to a feeling of relief at the sight of the harbour slipping behind us as the ship moved slowly out to sea.

ON the morning of the 25th day of July I was roused by some unusual movement of the *Gull*, and the sound of voices, strange, yet carrying something familiar in their tone. I came on deck to find her hove to, and the pilot clambering aboard from his boat alongside. Ahead of us was the narrow entrance to the Inverness Firth.

The wind scarcely ruffled the sea, and all so calm and still at that early hour of the day, we could hear the bark of a dog, and the crowing of cocks about the white cottages on the hill-side.

As the *Gull* came abreast of the beacon there came on the soft air off the land the oft-remembered scent of sea ware, of whins in bloom and wild roses, and above all, off yonder, gleaming white among the trees, the old home at Alturlie.

The tide was making, so we sailed up

the river to the citadel, and there I noticed a curious incident marking our arrival. As the *Gull* slowly hauled in to the quay-side I stood beside Ker, scanning the crowd of seamen and sightseers on the pier for some familiar face, and seeing none, I saw a man step to the edge of the pier and fling his coat open, showing for a moment a white rosette pinned over his heart. At the sight of this, Ker raised his hat in salutation.

The incident passed out of my mind for the moment, taken up as it was with the business of landing and getting my mails taken to the Citadel Inn ; but seated there at breakfast with Ker, I remembered and asked him the meaning of that display of a white rosette, and his evident satisfaction at the sight of it.

“ Ye would like to ken what yon lad meant ? ” said he, smiling across the table. “ Weel, Mr. Stuart, it’s a secret so far, but as it’s only a matter o’ a day or twa when the whole country will ken, I’ll tell ye.

“ It just means that the Prince has landed on the west coast ! ”

Astonished for a moment, I could only look at the man.

“ Do you know what troops have landed with him ? ” I asked.

“ No troops,” was the astonishing answer. “ There will be just Tullibardine, Sheridan, and Sullivan, and a few ither gentlemen ! ”

“ Then he will have landed with arms and money ? ” said I.

“ No arms but what they carry on their hanches ! ” said Ker. “ As for money, I dinna ken if they brocht much wi’ them, but there will be plenty men wi’ money and arms once things are gotten in shape ! ”

“ You seem to be well informed ; how did he come ? ” I asked, my brain whirling with the picture this madness conjured up.

“ Och, there will be nothing astonishing in that,” said Ker, “ seeing I am the lad that got the *Doutelle* for them, and I was hearing on the pier out there that the

Camerons are up, and in a week a' the clans will be on the march. I tell ye, the heather's on fire, Mr. Stuart ! ”

Mightily disturbed, I sat looking at Ker, who had risen from the table ; the Prince landed with neither trained troops, arms or money, and, once the news of the landing known, the narrow seas swarming with English cruisers. I might have said something of my conviction that the fire would be smothered, and, in the present temper of the Government, with more blood than the last, but Ker stood facing me with a smile of triumph on his face, and nothing I could have said on that point would be any use, so I held my tongue.

“ Weel,” said he, “ I must be on my way. Our bargain ends here, Mr. Stuart, and here, I suppose, oor ways pairt, but I would gie a good deal to hae ye alang wi' us.”

I rose, and he put out his hand, holding mine in his iron grip for a minute, as if with a thought to say more. But he

changed his mind. Pressing my hand in farewell, he caught up his hat, and nodding his head at me with a glint of triumph in his eyes, he went out and down the stair. A bold man, and a good comrade. I saw him from the window, with the man who had displayed the white rosette at the pierhead. They spoke for a minute or two, then together they strode up the shore to the town; like many another that day, their hearts high with hope.

With something like an ache in mine, I turned away when Ker passed out of sight. There was another window to that room where I could look across the fields and the sea to the wooded slope above Culloden House, and pick out, if I had only known, the very ground where all their high hopes were to go down in blood and ruin. But I only saw the house at Alturlie, and Ker being gone about his business, I was eager to be gone on mine, which, to be sure, had little thought in it of any Stuart, but a maid of that name.

McRimmon could wait ; the day being fine, I would first walk the length of Alturlie. So, giving orders concerning the care of my baggage until it was sent for, I set off across the fields to the sea beach.

Of all the pleasant paths I have trod in my time none I know can match this road that runs eastwards along the seashore from the Mill Burn, beyond the town of Inverness. And pleasant I found it on this summer morning, after eight long years, to saunter there, where every turn of the path greeted me like an old friend. The tide was full in ; there was the old bathing pool, yonder was the tall pine-tree where the sparrow-hawks nested every year. I even halted at the Toll House, but the new toll-keeper's wife either brewed an inferior brand, or the wines of France had spoiled my palate, for I found my enjoyment of treacle beer was a thing of the past. The sun grew warm, and the air heavy with the scent of pine, and it was my mood to dawdle along, lingering

here and there by trees and patches of whins, and bits of the beach that were all associated with the memory of some game or adventure of my boyhood. Here time seemed to have stood still; nothing was changed, only the pool, which we accounted a long swim across, would appear to have shrunk, and the branch of a great tree that overhung the path, a branch we were wont to consider it a bold feat to clamber and swing along, I could now touch with my cane. And through all this idling and turning over of old memories, along the old road, fragrant with the scent of whin blooms and wild roses, ran the thought of how I should meet Joan, and how she would look.

At length I came near to the top of the lane; it was here on this very spot that we had bade one another farewell, and my heart warmed at the memory of that parting with the little maid. Joan a grown woman! It was hard to picture the lassie who could climb after nests,

daring as any boy, and run like a deer, her long brown hair flying like a mane in the wind, dressed, a fine madam in long petticoats and rokelay.

I turned off the high road into the lane leading down to Alturlie. Yonder, showing above the tall holly hedge, was the top of the squat tower, with two little round windows set high up beneath the edge of the roof; windows that gave one approaching the house a lively impression of being stealthily surveyed by some beetle-browed giant out of the fairy books.

One thing I noted walking along the lane; the fields on either hand were not as they were in my grandfather's time. Then all was trim, and the land in a high state of cultivation. Now, I could see broken dykes, gaps in the untrimmed hedges, and many weeds among the growing crops. So, James Stuart, starving the land rather than pay the hinds' wages, was still living up to his old reputation for greed and cheese-paring.

I was half-way along the lane when a woman came through the gate in the hedge and walked towards me. As she drew near I saw this was no farm lass, but a tall young lady dressed in the mode, only that she was bareheaded, save for the snood binding a mass of glossy ringlets, as is the fashion with highland maids. I looked hard at the dark eyes regarding me with something of a doubt or a question, and wondered, could this be Joan?

I made my best bow as she was about to pass. "Madam!" said I, "once on a day I was very well known in these parts, and chancing to be in neighbourhood again, have made it my duty to find out if any of my old friends are still about who might remember me!"

She made a little curtsy. "Good-day to you, sir!" she said. "Not so many have left Alturlie that we are likely to forget them!"

"Might you by any chance know a lady named Joan Stuart?"

"No one could know her better!" she replied.

A quaint trick of raising her eyebrows, and a smile that showed a dimple in her cheek assured me, but still she looked at me in doubt. In the old days we used to strut and declaim together a play we had made with my mother's help, out of the book of *Macbeth*, wherein Joan was Lady Macbeth, and I Duncan, the King. Now looking at her, the words of the old play leaped back into my memory, and striking an attitude, I pointed to the house :

*"This castle hath a pleasant seat ; the air
Nimbly and sweetly recommends itself"—*

I broke off, watching her with a smile.

"Unto our gentle senses !"

she finished the line with wide-open eyes.

"Then it is really yourself, Seum?"

The kindly sound of the old name from the lips that I last heard it on thrilled me like a caress.

She put out her hand. "When did you come? We have been looking for you for weeks; and my! how grand you are. But you haven't grown so much; I am as tall as you, Simon!" Which was true, for Joan looked me level in the eyes; I am neither tall nor stoutly built, but of medium height, slim, and dark as a Spaniard.

Then the first rush of questions asked and answered, she cried, "But what am I thinking about! You must come up to the house; you will be starved with hunger, and tired after that long walk. My father is in!"

"How is uncle James?" I asked.

She paused with her hand on the gate, and looked grave.

"Until a day or two ago, I could have answered you. Father is much the same except that he is not so young as he was, and you remember how hard he was, Simon? I think the older he gets, the more he strives to pinch and scrape. The

way he grudges to spend money—stinting and saving—one would think he is afraid of coming to a day when he will be holding out his bonnet on the roadside. But since McRimmon's man was here three days ago, I don't know what has gone wrong with him. He is just going about the place glowering and talking to himself like a man fair demented, and nobody dares ask him what it is that is bothering him.

“Ye'll speak him fair; ye'll no quarrel wi' him, Simon? I will be remembering how bad he treated you!”

Seeing the maid's fear lest I should quarrel with my uncle, said I:

“Give me your hand.

Conduct me to mine host: we love him highly,

And continue our good graces towards him.

By your leave, hostess.”

Laughing merrily, with a low curtsy, Joan gave me her hand, and cried: “Oh, Simon, you will be remembering the daft days. I mind them, and canna forget.”

We pressed together through the gate,

and, her face being close to mine, I kissed her.

“ Fie ! For shame, Simon ! Is this the French manner ? ” she cried, the roses glowing in her cheeks.

“ Eight years ago you put your arms around my neck, and kissed me, madam, so now I pay you back ! ”

“ Ah, yes, eight years ago, Simon. But how many maids have you kissed since then ? ”

“ Never a maid,” said I, with certain mental reservations ; but what would you, sirs, with Joan beside me ?

“ Then for one that has had such little practice, ye do very well, and no time lost about it, I think ; but there, you came to see me first, Seum,” said Joan, smiling very prettily at me, and hand in hand, as cousins should, when one of them is a handsome maid, we walked across the lawn to the house.

“ Just as it used to be ! ” said I, noting that, though beyond the holly hedge the

land was neglected, here the grass was trimmed and green, and the great flower-beds bloomed as they did in the days of grandfather's care.

"Oh, this is my care!" said Joan. "I keep it so in remembrance. Here is father!"

Over sixty, which I believe would be about his age, James Stuart stood in the porch as we came up, peering at us beneath his pent brows, and fingering his chin as of old, a man very ill at ease.

"Here is cousin Simon home again, father!" said Joan in answer to the question in his eyes.

He stepped back a pace and put his hand to the pillar of the porch as though she had struck him.

"Simon!" he cried, with a kind of a catch in his voice.

I might have been the devil himself come to Alturlie, the way he glared and gasped at my name. Then, pulling himself together, he came down the steps, and

put out a bony, trembling fist which I shook heartily enough. I am not the man to nurse a grudge, and, after all, the man was Joan's father, my father's brother, and I bore him no ill-will in the world.

"Man, Simon!" he cried with a quaver in his voice. "I would never have known ye, but we have been expecting ye ever since McRimmon gave us the news about Clunes. Come in, come in, and gie us your crack!"

"I will leave you with father, Simon, while I see about the dinner!" said Joan, and away she hurried, leaving me in the old sitting-room, where her father set out glasses and a decanter of claret.

James Stuart was never the best of company, and now, seeing him spilling the wine, and hearing him say, over and over again, "So ye are back again, Simon. Aye, aye, man!" said I, "Here's to you, Uncle James, and hoping you will not be bothering your head with what's past and done with, it is all forgotten with me."

"Aye, aye, Simon, to be sure," said he, blinking at me and filling my glass again, "ye have no seen McRimmon yet?"

"No, that can wait," I replied.

"Surely, surely, that can wait!" said he, and looking up at his queer repetition of my words, I saw the devil glaring at me for an instant through my uncle's eyes, and I began to think James Stuart a trifle insane.

"And where is Malcolm?" said I.

"Oh, Malcolm, to be sure, ye haven't seen him yet. He's at the Muir of Ord wi' the lambs!"

The glasses were filled again, but the conversation flagged. Plainly, for some reason or other, James Stuart was ill at ease, and his thoughts elsewhere. A false note ran through his strained, awkward attempts at hospitality, and presently I was glad to see Joan come into the room. Then, a little to my surprise, but to my great relief, he rose from the table, announcing that he had a tryst in Inverness

with a farmer concerning some heifers, and this would prevent him staying for dinner.

“There was no word of business in Inverness this morning!” said Joan, as we saw him ambling away on his pony a few minutes later, “but the Lord only knows what bee is in his bonnet this past day or two!”

Over dinner, I told Joan that I planned to live at Clunes, and to that end I was going on to Campbellton to see if Janet was still there.

“Oh, yes,” said Joan, “Janet will still be with her sister, and my! but she will be the happy woman, keeping house for her laddie again. But it will be dull for you at Clunes!”

“Ah,” said I, looking straight at her, “dull it will be, but that is a condition I have hopes of amending before long. Janet will do very well as housekeeper, but Clunes will require a mistress, and I have the very lady in my eye!”

“ Indeed ! Are you going to Campbellton to-day ? ” asked Joan, bending her head and swiftly changing from a subject I would have been happy to continue.

“ Yes ! ” said I, “ and to that end I will ask you to lend me a horse. Having made up my mind to do anything, I don’t believe in wasting time about it.”

“ I was just thinking that ! I will see one of the lads about saddling a horse,” said Joan, hurrying from the room.

“ Ye’ll no’ be stranger, Simon ? ” said she, at the gate.

“ I will get me a horse, that will soon know every stone on the road between here and Clunes ! ” said I.

ABOUT the hour of sunset I rode into Campbellton, and leaving my horse at the inn, made enquiries for the whereabouts of Janet. The ostler pointed to a cottage along the village street.

A woman answered my tirl on the risp, and learning my business, started back in surprise. "Aye, sir," said she, recovering herself and looking hard at me, "but will ye no' come ben? my sister Janet is no' at hame the day, but it would just be a wonderful thing if you was the young maister home again?"

"I am Simon Stuart," said I, smiling on the dame, who in face and form reminded me of my old nurse, "and if I am right in taking you for Kirsty, the sister of Janet, will you tell me when she will be home again? Or where can I find her,

for my business with her is of some importance."

"Surely, surely. Aye me the day! but Janet will just be overjoyed, and the business will be awful important to be sure, for Janet took the carrier's cart for Inverness, fower days ago, and without a word of warning to me and I haven't seen or heard tell o' her since!"

It seemed to me here that, in some way, Kirsty and I were at cross purposes.

"Is Janet quite well?" I asked.

"Oh, yes, Janet was well enough in body when she left for the toon, but I would no' say as much for her mind, laughing one meenute and crying the next, aboot her laddie, and the ould villain—which I would think she meant your uncle at Alturlie, begging your pardon for making as bould as to say the like, Maister Simon—like a cratur demented, she was.

"My sir, but I would never have known the laddie that left Alturlie.

"Ah, no, Janet is no' in service!" said

Kirsty, "beyond keeping hoose for a friend, or nursing some of the ladies round about. Janet has never been in service since she left Alturlie."

"Well, my business with Janet is, to ask her if she will come and keep house for me at Clunes. Do you know of anything in this business that has taken her into Inverness, that will prevent her coming to Clunes?" I asked.

"Maister Simon, it will be like giving my sister Janet a new lease of life to serve ye. I'm thinking it's for you she went to Inverness, and Clunes, ye say?" said Kirsty, looking at me in a curious manner, "surely it will be Alturlie ye mean?"

"Clunes is to be my home, Kirsty," said I.

"Ah weel, I'll no' be understanding my sister, but I thocht she said ye were coming back to Alturlie, A'm sure she did!" said Kirsty, shaking her head emphatically.

"Janet's visit to Inverness was doubtless prompted by hearing that I was now the

owner of Clunes. I will catch her in Inverness to-night," said I.

"Oh yes, and I dare say ye well know where, at McRimmon's the ould lawyer mannie !

"But, Maister Simon, there's the rain on, and it will be pitch dark, long before ye get the length o' Inverness, foreby, the roads are no' very safe these nichts. Ye will just stop wi' me till the morning. If I let ye go on a nicht like this, I would never hear the end o' it from Janet."

I said something about giving trouble, and staying at the inn.

"No trouble in the world, and what for would ye stop at the inn? I wouldna sleep there if they paid me for it," said Kirsty, bustling about setting the table, "when I have a bed wi' fresh clean linen, a supper o' fresh haddies and a dram o' good speerits here for ye !"

It was like being mothered by Janet again ; the rain was now falling heavily, and agreeable to Kirsty's wish—she would

have been mortally offended had I gone to the inn—I passed the night there in such comfort as I had been a stranger to for many a day.

Early next morning I took the road, faintly curious at Kirsty's description of Janet's hurried departure for Inverness, and intent upon wasting no time about setting up my housekeeping at Clunes. I rode straight on without drawing bridle, and dismounted at McRimmon's door on the river-side, below the bridge, as the steeple clock chimed the hour of ten.

As I entered the outer office a man came out of McRimmon's private room, it afterwards occurred to me in some disorder, whether at my appearance, or what, I could not say. Having no recollections of the fellow, I asked if he were McRimmon's clerk, and if his master was in.

“Maister McRimmon is no' in, but I could send for him if your honour pleases!” said he.

“If that will be convenient for Mr.

McRimmon, I will wait, and you can tell the messenger to say it's the gentleman he has been expecting."

"Oh yes, to be sure, sir, and the name will be Mr. Stuart; I had the pleasure of seeing your honour land at the shore yesterday morning!"

I nodded and turned away to look out at the window. Passing the time by watching the river and the folks going to and fro upon the bridge, I chanced to look in a small mirror that hung on the wall by the window, and was surprised to see the clerk surveying me with a look of extraordinary interest. I turned swiftly, but he was busily scratching away on a sheet of paper.

I dare say there was reason for his interest in me; strangers were rare enough in Inverness, except seamen, but when I turned again to the window there I saw him, through the mirror, watching me. The little play roused my interest. Remembering a word dropped by Joan, this would be the fellow whose visit had such

an effect on her father. I turned again to find him intent on his work. A lean, secretive-looking rogue, with an old dusty scratch wig set atop of a long cadaverous face that wore a smirk I took to be set there, no matter what the fellow's mood.

The door was violently opened, and I forgot the clerk at McRimmon's entry.

It might have been only eight days, instead of eight uncommonly long years, since I saw McRimmon, so lightly had time dealt with him. The same stout, rosy, energetic, old-fashioned little gentleman, wearing a wig of a forgotten mode, and the wide skirted coat and breeches that were the fashion in King William's reign.

"Weel, Simon!" he cried, turning me to the window. "It's yourself! Here you are at last, and it micht be your father come to life again. You are his living image! E'cod! I don't know the day I was so pleased to meet a man. Ye are a day or two late, but still in the nick o' time, for I have the great news for ye!"

“ Here, Dougal ! ” he cried, turning to his clerk, “ away up to the Black Vennel wi’ ye and bring Mistress Munro ; tell her Maister Simon is here ! ”

“ Come ben, Simon, come ben ! ” He ushered me into his private room, and pressing me forcibly into a chair, trotted to a cupboard and came back with a decanter and glasses.

“ It’s no’ often I take a dram at this hour o’ the day, but this is a very special occasion—oh, very special ! Good health ! Simon my boy !

“ Man ! ” he cried, setting down his empty glass, and taking off his wig to mop his close-cropped head, “ this beats all. But no’ a word till Janet is here ; it would spile a story that micht be oot o’ a play ! ”

“ Nothing wrong, I suppose—no mistake about Clunes ? ” said I, mystified by the old lawyer’s boisterous manner.

“ No, no, nothing wrong about Clunes. It’s no’ Clunes Janet is going to tell ye about—damn the woman, what’s keeping her ? ”

he cried, bustling out to the front door and looking down the street.

Five minutes later, when Janet had got over her weeping and joy at seeing me again, I heard McRimmon, in the outer office, say : “ Dougal, I am no’ in for the next hour, if it was the Provost himsel’.”

He came in, closing the door behind him, and going to a strong-box, unlocked it, and came back to the table with a folded paper in his hand.

“ Noo, Janet, on wi’ your story ! ” said he, seating himself opposite us at the table and hugging the document against his breast.

“ My dear laddie, the story is soon told ! ” said Janet, smiling at me and wiping the tears from her eyes. “ Ye mind the furniture o’ ye’re dear mother’s room, that ye gave me to tak’ care o’, and ye mind her writing-desk wi’ all the little drawers in it, that many’s the time ye played wi’, and all the flooers and leaves carved so bonnie on it ? ”

“ Surely,” said I.

“ I had it put in my room, at my sister Kirsty’s, and it has been a very dear pleasure o’ mine to keep everything fair and bonnie as it was in your mother’s day. No hands touched them but my own.

“ Ah, weel, fower, no, five days ago, I canna be sure, I’m that throughother wi’ what’s happened, going aboot the room, dusting and polishing, I caught my foot in the sheepskin rug. To save ma’sel’ from falling, I pit oot my hand on the writing-desk. The bit came away wi’ me, and ower I went wi’ a dunt on my hinder end, wi’ a little drawer in my lap, and in the drawer a paper that I read ower sitting there on the floor. When I finished the reading o’ it, I just dressed myself and cam’ away in to Mr. McRimmon here, and that’s the paper I found, in his hand.”

“ Which same I now hand over with all the pleasure in the world, and ask you to read it, for yourself, Simon ! ” said Mr. McRimmon, with a chuckle.

Here is what I read in my grandfather’s

hand, and dated the day after my mother's funeral :

The Last Will and Testament of Simon Stuart, of Alturlie by Inverness.

I, Simon Stuart, of Alturlie, being of sound mind, but knowing my time is short, do hereby will and bequeath, to my dear grandson, Simon Stuart, the house and lands of Alturlie, with all furniture, stock and plenishings thereon.

To my son, James Stuart, I leave the house, land, stock and plenishings at Petty, to be held in trust by him for my dear grandchildren, Joan and Malcolm. Of the money lying at the British Linen Bank at Inverness, I leave two hundred guineas to my housekeeper, Janet Munro, and my wish that she will remain in her place at Alturlie.

To my grandchildren, Joan and Malcolm, one hundred guineas in shares at the British Linen Bank, to be left in the charge of Roderick McRimmon, lawyer of Inverness, until they are twenty-one years of age.

To the above Roderick McRimmon, one hundred guineas, and his pick of my books at Alturlie.

To every serving man and woman at Alturlie at the time of my death, five guineas.

My saddle pony to be saddled and rode no more, but to run free in the pasture till he dies.

SIMON STUART.

Witnesses: Duncan MacIntosh, Grieve at Allan Fern, Malcolm MacIntosh, son of above.

To say that I was thunderstruck would hardly explain my feelings when I came to the end. It was the first paragraph of the will that set me thinking hard. At last, when I laid it down on the table, my mind was made up; if McRimmon and Janet would fall in with my wishes.

“You don’t look like a man that has come into a fine estate, Simon!” said McRimmon, looking hard at me.

“McRimmon, and you, Janet, how many people have you told about this will?” said I.

“There’s not a soul knows about it yet, but the three of us,” says McRimmon.

“I think a hint or two had been dropped. What about that man of yours, McRimmon?”

“He knows nothing about it!” said McRimmon, “but what does it matter who knows about it? The will is signed and witnessed, and I can pit my hand on the witnesses when they are wanted. Mac-Intosh and his son are in service together at Darnaway. What is in your mind, Simon?”

“It is in my mind, if you will both agree with me, to say nothing about it, for the present.”

They both stared at me in astonishment.

“But this is a most unbusinesslike state of affairs, Simon!” said McRimmon. “I never remember, in all my days, such a thing as the proved heir to a fine property refusing it.”

“ Clunes is mine, and the money can be paid out of it,” said I.

“ Tchah!” cried McRimmon testily, “ A’m no’ caring a pinch o’ sneeshun about my money.”

“ An’ I’m sure, laddie, the money is no’ bothering me,” said Janet.

“ Then give me a little time to think it out. I promise an explanation that will satisfy you both,” said I. “ McRimmon, the decanter is at your hand ! ”

McRimmon filled the glasses, and bowing to us, said, “ Weel, here is my respects to ye, Janet, and your very good health, Simon, but I will say this is a disappointment. I thocht I was to have the pleasure of showing this to James Stuart. The sleekit ould miser, it would be like drawing the heart’s blood out o’ him to give up Alturlie ; but he needs a lesson, and the estate is going to rack and ruin wi’ the way he starves it.”

“ I would be sorry for Joan,” said Janet, looking at me over her wine. “ I hear ye was at Alturlie yesterday. Ye would see

Joan, a fine young leddie, and leal as she's bonnie ! ”

“ Och aye, to be sure, there's Joan ! ” said McRimmon, following Janet's eyes.

“ We will drink Joan's health,” said I.

“ Wi' all my heart ! ” said McRimmon, “ a fine lass, and God knows who she takes it off, for it's no' her father.”

“ An' now,” said he, going back to the strong-box, and putting away my grandfather's will, “ here is your uncle's will and the documents concerning Clunes. We can settle everything ower the dinner, which I hope ye will both give an old bachelor the pleasure o' taking with him.”

It was a very happy trio that sat down to McRimmon's dinner, and, Janet telling me that she was at liberty, I gave her there and then full charge, and settled all arrangements for her going to take over the house at Clunes.

*IX Joan Sends Me an Invitation Which I
Accept*

Now was I settled at Clunes, with Janet keeping house for me, to the quiet life of a small landed proprietor, with, it might reasonably be thought, naught to disturb my peace of mind but the cares of my estate, varied by a little shooting and fishing, and the visits to Alturlie, whither I believe no one made the mistake of thinking I rode for the pleasure of my uncle's company.

There was little peace for any man in the highlands in the days of the '45, and, as I am a living sinner, my peace and pleasure came to an end before I had been a month at Clunes.

On a fine afternoon, about the middle of August, two visitors came to see me. The first was McRimmon's clerk, Dougal, with papers relating to some business done by my mother's brother before his death and

now requiring my signature. After the clerk had gone I took up the work he had interrupted me in, to wit, a book of flies and the looping of casting lines, with no thought in my head but a day with the trout at Kilmorack, when Janet came in with the news of a stranger riding into the yard wishing to see me.

Wondering who this would be, I asked her to show the gentleman in, and a minute later I was shaking hands with Ker. I had never clapped eyes on him since that morning at breakfast in the Citadel, after landing from the *Gull*. But I knew by the way news travels in the highlands that he had gone south, and now he sat before me, a very saddle-weary man, splashed with mud to the cocks of his beaver.

“What brings you to Clunes, and what is your news?” said I.

“First, Mr. Stuart, a horse that’s no’ fit to carry me anither mile, and second, my news is that Sir John Cope is marching on Fort Augustus, and the Prince is on the

march to cut him off. If Cope tries to cross the Pass of Corryarrack we'll hae him bag and baggage."

"Is this true?" said I, in amazement. "Then the troops have landed from France?"

"The divil a sodger has landed from France, but the Prince is after Cope with five thousand clansmen. That is as true as you are sitting there, and I am here, asking ye for a mouthful o' meat and drink, and after that the loan o' a fresh beastie to take me on to Beaufort, where I ride to bring up the Frasers and the Chisholms, another fifteen hundred men!

"Yes, Stuart," said Ker, surveying me in high spirits, after a maid had set bread and meat and a jug of ale before him. "The Frasers will march the minute they get the order I carry to Lord Lovat. Ye'll no' be content to bide here growing neeps wi' this guid work on hand?"

To this I returned no answer, but sat pondering Ker's astounding piece of news.

Ker finished the ale and heaved himself wearily out of his chair. "Weel, sir, I must be west this road to Beaufort, and a thankful man will I be when I get to the end o' it. How far d'ye ca' it frae here?"

"Three or four miles," said I.

"In the matter o' that fresh mount, then, Mr. Stuart?"

"To be sure, Ker," said I; "anything in my stable."

Rousing myself, I saw him mounted, and walked at his stirrup in silence to the gate.

There, holding in his horse, Ker bent from the saddle.

"I ken fine how it is wi' ye, Mr. Stuart," said he. "A man in your position is no' expected to gang light-hearted into this business; but see who is in it already. The pick o' the men in the south, all but the Campbells. Lochiel, Murray, Clanronald. Cluny is ready to be asked. Here in the north only the McLeods and the Grants are holding back waiting a sign. Before a month is ower your heid, ye'll hae to throw

in wi' us, or do what it is no' to be thocht a man o' ye're name could think o' doing."

Ker waited a moment, and when I gave him no answer, said he : " If ye think o' standing clear—I tell ye this, for the sake o' a ride we took together—leave the north till this quarrel is settled. Good day to ye, Mr. Stuart."

Ker straightened in his saddle, and gravely saluting me, put spurs to his horse and dashed off at a canter. I watched him to a bend in the road, then I slowly returned to the house and put away my fishing tackle.

For days past this question of the rebellion and my own attitude regarding it had hung over my life like a black, ugly shadow. I had tried to put the thoughts of it away from me, but Ker's visit and his parting words told me I could not put it away much longer. No landing of troops from France ! I would not be driven into this thing. I knew my countrymen, and brave though they were, what chances of success they had in the long run against

the trained, equipped army England would put in the field. All I had read of the '15, all my training as a soldier, told me it was madness, and yet—and yet! I paced up and down my room fuming and fretting. My heart, the traditions of my people, pulling me this way; my brain, and the knowledge of the dark consequences of defeat to these poor countrymen of mine, pulling me the other—one of thousands in Scotland, in those days in the autumn of the year 1745.

A very strange thing to ponder upon is the shortness of public memory, and the way events, that one living in the days when they happened would think could never be forgotten, pass out of men's minds.

Lads and lasses make pilgrimages up to the Moor, every sixteenth day of April, to lay their posies on the graves of Culloden. Men sit by the fire in the long winter nights, and tell their bairns tales of the '45. It is still an affair of yesterday, yet already the memory of it grows dim. And, among that which is forgotten is the position of

those who could not see eye to eye with the Jacobites.

Forgotten are the days when men found on their tables little folded billets containing a white feather, and were hooted by the rabble on the streets of Inverness. Or waken up some morning to find their cattle driven off and a threat of death nailed on their gates.

No more has a man to make a decision that on the one hand may beggar and send him flying for his life to the hills, hunted like a wolf, with no safe refuge day or night, or on the other hand strip him of friends and all he holds dear, and make his name a by-word in the country-side.

The men of my acquaintance, one would think, were heart and soul for the Prince, but what did they know? Battles and kingdoms are not won by roaring "The Lads wi' the Kilts," and of all those who talked so glib over their wine in Baillie's of what they would do to the Hanoverians, I knew not one who had seen service. As

for the ladies in the north—egad, in those days I never met one who did not openly wear the white cockade.

When Cope, learning of the clans' march to cut him off at Corryarrack, decided to abandon his march on Fort Augustus, and march north, I do believe it was the ladies who prevented him from enlisting one recruit in Inverness.

And this brings me to Joan. Under the nose of the Lord President, who had come north to Culloden House on the first news of the Prince's landing, Joan and others had formed a club composed, without exception, I believe, of all the ladies of the district, under the name of the "League of the White Cockade," or some such high-sounding title. The headquarters of this precious organisation was at Castle Stuart. It would have been at Alturlie, but Uncle James, whatever else he might give in to, where Joan was concerned, mustered up sufficient resolution to put his foot down on that. And at Castle Stuart, in a room

draped with a great white silken flag embroidered with "Righ Hamish go Bragh," these madcaps busied themselves plotting the downfall of King George, and drumming up recruits for the Prince. I had gone the length of warning Joan against the danger of playing with gunpowder, and got snubbed for my pains, and as a consequence I had not been to Alturle for some time past. Nor had I stirred from home for fear of my sheep and cattle.

To me at Clunes came Malcolm, the bearer of an invitation from the "League of the White Cockade," to dance at Castle Stuart on the evening of the 25th of September, and beneath the printed words on the card was scrawled, in Joan's hand, "Do come!"

Malcolm stood slapping his boot with his riding-whip while I read this, and when I looked up said he: "Simon, d'ye know I was of the mind to lose that and say nothing about it to ye. Ye'll no' come!"

"Why not?" said I.

"Because," said he, "I know ye are no'

wi' us, and that," he tapped the card with his whip, "the dance, is a blind. It's a public declaration that's wanted from you, and every man there, of the side he stands on!"

Well, it had to come, and here it was at last. I experienced a feeling of relief, as turning to Malcolm, said I: "No, my lad, I cannot refuse, nor would I make any excuse for absenting myself. I will be at Castle Stuart on the 25th!"

"Then you will join us?" cried Malcolm, eagerly.

"No, I cannot join you!" said I, shaking my head.

"Man, d'ye know in that case, you will be publicly insulted!" said Malcolm.

"I have dealt with insults before now," said I.

"But, for God's sake, listen, Simon. What can you do against a hundred?"

"If there were five hundred, it would not matter, Malcolm. Sooner or later, I must declare myself, and it is best I should do it there!"

“ Man, this is damnable ! Would ye no’ just go away for a while, Simon ? ” said he earnestly.

“ Go away ? ” I cried.

“ Yes ! It would be all settled, and then ye can come back——”

“ To be pointed out as a white-livered cur, by every man and woman on the street ! ” said I.

“ Then, by God, Prince or no Prince, you are my cousin, that I’m hoping one day to call my brother, and they’ll insult the pair o’ us ! ” Malcolm banged his fist on the table, and before I could stop him, he had flung out of the room and galloped off.

I rode to Petty on the morning of the 25th, and passing through the town, I called on McRimmon.

“ Ye’ve been a long time on the road this visit, Simon ! ” said he, looking gravely over his barnacles when we were seated in his private room.

“ True ; I have been very busy with one thing and another,” said I.

“ I could wish ye had no business with Mr. Ker, Simon,” said he.

“ Man ! ” said he, observing my start, “ did ye forget ye are back in the heilan’s, where a man like Ker couldna blow his nose but the very stones in the street would have news o’ it ? Ye’ll no guess, either, who I had the news o’ his visit to ye from ; yer Uncle James ! ”

“ How on earth could he have known of that ? ” said I. And then I remembered the visit of McRimmon’s clerk. I said, “ Your man Dougal is of an observing turn of mind, but it would seem he does not come straight to you with all he hears and sees ! ”

“ D’ye mean Dougal saw Ker on his visit to you and told James Stuart of it ? ” asked McRimmon.

“ Seeing your clerk left Clunes about the time he got there, I would advance that as a likely explanation,” said I,

“ I would think so, too,” said McRimmon, pursing up his lips, “ and I will take order about Dougal.

“About this Mr. Ker, Simon. Of course it is no’ ill to guess his business wi’ ye. I suppose, laddie, ye’ll be in it like all the rest o’ them. There’s plenty men in the country sitting on the dyke ! Would ye no take a leaf oot o’ their book, Simon ? ” said the old fellow, looking at me mournfully.

“Would you have said that to a man thirty years ago ? ” said I, with a smile, “for if all I have heard is true, a certain McRimmon was pretty deep in the ’15 ! ”

“Och, aye, thirty years ago ! ” said McRimmon, “but old blood runs slow, and I canna forget the bloody end o’ that bungled business, and the shameful way brave men were left in the lurch ! ”

“And I cannot forget what I have read and been told of that same ! ” said I.

“And this might be another ’15, Simon.”

“It will be worse,” said I.

“And I’m no’ sae keen on the Stuarts as I was, thirty years ago, Simon ! ” said McRimmon, laying his hand on my shoulder.

“And I am not so very keen on the

Stuarts myself; in fact, McRimmon, I am not keen on them at all. I am against them, and there's a few folks going to hear me say so, to-night, no later ! ”

It was a very curious thing to see the way the old Jacobite started away from me — “ My God ! Ye're no' a Hanoverian, Simon ? ” said he.

“ God knows what I am, McRimmon,” said I, “ but there's one thing I am not, and that's a Jacobite ! ”

He looked at me gravely. “ I confess, Simon, I was under a different impression, and I canna understand ye. Here ye are visited by a man well known to be a Jacobite agent, a man ye travelled from France wi', and noo ye tell me ye are no' for the Stuarts. I will be plain wi' ye, Simon. This is no kind of work for your father's son ! ”

So, to put the old gentleman's mind at rest, and that I was not, as he was beginning to think, a man with a foot in either camp, I told him of my acquaintance with Ker.

“ So that's the way o' it ? ” said he, when

I had done. "Weel, laddie, that clears the air a bit ; but the position ye are taking up is no' going to make your life a very pleasant one in the north here, I see that very plain."

"I see that myself, but, short of going away, a thing I am determined not to do, there is nothing else for it," said I.

"Weel, the family ye come o' never wanted for spunk, and ye seem to have an extra dose o' it, Simon ; but I would think twice before I went to Castle Stuart to-night, if I stood in your shoes."

"Oh, maybe I will find a friend or two yet," said I, putting on my hat.

"I hope ye will, and I would not be ower hasty, Simon. Mind and don't be too ready to take up what will be said to ye. Weel, weel, to think o' that now !"

He stood at the door, watching me mount and ride away, and such is the way of human nature, I felt that I had dropped in his estimation, and McRimmon, in some way, was disappointed in me.

*X Tells of the Rout at Castle Stuart and What
Happened to Me There*

I RODE to the inn at Petty, where I put up my horse and changed my dress. The evening being fine and the earth dry under-foot, I walked quietly along the hedge-lined lane, sweet smelling with the perfume of dying summer, and so up the avenue to Castle Stuart. And as I walked, I pondered and conned over the reasons I had to give for the position I was taking up.

I was not prepared for the sight that met me on reaching the end of the avenue, and for a minute stood somewhat daunted at the great occasion made of the night. The house was ablaze with lights from garret to cellar. A great *bon-feu* had been built in the open space before the main door ; there a cask or two of ale had been staved, and in the glare of the flames a crowd of lads and lassies were dancing to the pipes.

Threading my way through this throng apparently gone mad, I entered the hall, where I was met by Fraser, the estate grieve.

"You are late, Mr. Stuart," said he, as a footman took my hat and cane.

"What is the meaning of all this, Fraser?" I asked him, pointing to the dancers on the green.

"Surely ye'll have heard?" said he, looking at me in surprise.

"Nothing," said I.

"Och, then, go in, Mr. Stuart!" said he, with a broad smile, "go in and hear the news that's come north of Saturday. There has no' been a day like it for Scotland for many a year. The company has an inkling o' it, but Colonel Anne is to read it oot after this dance, and I see her with the paper in her hand."

I stood by the door of the great room watching the company in the full swing of a contra dance. They were all here. All the hot-heads for miles around had gathered.

Frasers and Chisholms from the west, MacIntoshes from Moy, McKenzies from the Black Isle, and looking on, one thing caught my eye about the guests. I was dressed in black from head to foot, only relieved by my cravat and ruffles; even my hair—I could never abide powder—was dressed plain with a black ribbon. Whereas, so far as I could see, every man in the room was in full highland dress or trews, and every lady either wore a tartan sash or snood.

Now the dance came to an end with a great huzza and clapping of hands, and Colonel Anne, as Lady MacIntosh was called, a tall handsome lady of somewhat masculine appearance, escorted by two gentlemen, took up her stand on the platform at the far end of the room, where the fiddlers sat.

One of the gentlemen raised his hand for silence, and following the guests who thronged towards the stage, I heard her read out in a clear ringing voice the astonishing news of Gladsmuir.

When she looked up with a smile and held aloft the sheet of paper, for a moment there was dead silence. Then such a cheering broke in and out of the house as made the very lustres jingle. Claymores, rapiers, scarfs, were brandished in the air, and, to add to the din of wild enthusiasm, a dozen pipes struck up "Pibroch a Donal Dhu," and blowing for dear life, made a circuit of the room, and marching through the door, took up a position in the midst of the wild cheering gathering outside.

Was ever mortal man placed in such a position ?

When the cheering died down, the crowd of ladies and gentlemen broke up into little groups, or passed from one to the other eagerly talking of the news ; while the serving men ran hither and thither with trays of decanters and glasses.

I had only been there something under half an hour, and having again withdrawn to near the door, had, so far, remained

unnoticed. Now I had that curious feeling of being under scrutiny, and turning my head, looked straight in the eye, one of a little company a few yards away, a gentleman dressed in a rich, plum-coloured suit. The rest of the group were all deep in talk, and turned the other way. Only this gentleman looked at me so intently. I began to think him impertinent, when I was struck with something more than curiosity in his eye. The man looked as though he knew me and was pleased about something. Returning the stare, I was vaguely conscious of having met him before ; but at that moment Joan caught sight of me.

Leaving the company, she came swiftly. " Oh, Simon ! " she cried, her eyes dancing with excitement. " Where have you been all the evening ? Is not this the glorious news ? And where are you now, with your prophecies of defeat ? "

" I am astonished at the news, Joan, it would be idle to deny that," said I gravely ;

“ but this is only the opening round of the campaign. Come to me in six months and ask me what I think of it ! ”

“ Simon, I just lose patience with you. There is nothing can stand up to the claymore ! ” she cried. And her raised voice brought some of the company about us.

Turning to them with a smile, said Joan :
“ Here is my cousin, by no means impressed with the news we have all heard to-night, but hinting yet at defeat.”

“ Perhaps the gentleman has reasons unknown to us that might account for his frame of mind,” said a quiet voice behind me.

I turned, and found the speaker to be the gentleman in the plum-coloured suit. For a moment I forgot Joan and the others, and vaguely disturbed looked on him in some curiosity. He was very tall, taller than I by several inches. A dark thin man, between thirty and forty, regarding me with something like a sneer in his

black eyes. He would have been altogether strikingly handsome only for a blemish that gave a sinister cast to his face. His nose was bent to one side a little, and looking closely at him, I was again taken with the thought of having met him before, but where, for the life of me, I could not say.

"I have not the pleasure of knowing your name, sir!" said I, bowing to him. "Nor can I remember for the moment where we have met."

"We should all be well known to one another here! O'Brady is my name. I have the pleasure of knowing yours, Mr. Stuart!" said he, returning my bow, but ignoring my latter remark.

So he was one of the Irish, and I was off the scent.

"You was about to say, Mr. Stuart——?" said he.

"Nothing, sir," said I.

O'Brady looked at me with a smile for a moment, then turning away, some quick

whispered sentences passed between him and two or three other men standing near.

The whole company now pressed about us, and sensing by the sudden silence fallen on the room, that something out of the ordinary was afoot, looked on me with curious eyes, standing alone in the middle of the crowd.

The little conference between O'Brady and the others only lasted a minute, and now McKenzie of Kessock picked up the ball as though there had been no interruption.

"But deuce take it, Stuart," said he, "you was thinking nothing of what the clans had done at Gladsmuir, and the news is true, as you have heard. General Cope was completely routed, sir!"

Joan stood near, with Malcolm, looking at me with appealing eyes. It is a hard thing to refuse a lady, but I had never hidden my opinions. There were men and women about us who had heard me declare them in private; to go back on them in public was to be regarded as a man afraid.

And another thought pricked me in looking at Joan. It was at her invitation I stood there, and she must have known something like this would have happened. Did she think to turn me with a trick ?

The faces about me seemed to press forward as they waited for my answer, but though I knew the moment when I would be called on to declare myself was near at hand, I would do nothing to hasten it. I would declare with dignity. So, in fencing for an opening, I answered McKenzie quietly, "What I said to my cousin was for her private ear !"

"I could not help overhearing your remark, Mr. Stuart," struck in O'Brady. "If I remember right, it was to the effect that the Prince would be defeated within six months, and I ventured to observe that perhaps you had reasons for saying so. I believe," smiling to those about us, "I am voicing the opinion of the company in asking you to state them, sir !"

"If that is so——"

“ Yes, yes, Mr. Stuart ! ” cried a voice, “ let us hear what you have to say ! ”

“ I have this to say ! ” said I. “ The Prince, with four or five thousand men, has surprised and defeated some two or three thousand badly led troops. I am a soldier with four campaigns behind me, and I tell you this : it is the trained troops that will win in the end. Have the promised regiments from France landed ? England will, sooner or later, have fifty thousand in the field to break the rebellion ; where are you going to rise and equip an army to face them ? ”

“ For a man who, if there is anything in a name and family traditions, should be with us, that is not what the company would expect to hear from you, Stuart ! ” said McKenzie. “ You forget the Jacobites in the south and in England ! ”

“ No, sir, I have not forgotten the Jacobites in the south. I remember hearing of them in the '15. Have they come out ? If they have it is news to me,” said I.

“ This is no’ the ’15,” retorted McKenzie. “ I thought,” he cried, looking round the circle, “ that in this gathering all were of the honest party, but it would seem I am mistaken. I now call upon every lady and gentleman in this room, who is for the Prince, to hold up his hand ! ”

Instantly, with huzzas and cries of “ Righ Hamish go Bragh,” every hand was up. All but mine.

It was a scene never to forget. The huge lofty room, lit by dozens of candles. The gay tartans and dresses, the bright eyes and faces full of enthusiasm. Dazed for a moment, I heard, as in a dream, McKenzie say, “ We are waiting on you, Stuart ! ”

He waited a full minute in dead silence, then as I made no sign, he cried, “ So you are not with us ? ”

It had come at last. I looked about ; Joan was staring at me with wide-open eyes, her hand clutching her brother’s arm. And the other faces—most of them were those of men and women who well knew

me and my people. They were watching me, waiting for what I would say, and I was going to disappoint them all. In a minute they would all turn away in scorn.

I shook my head sadly. "I am not against you, but in this business I am not with you!"

"For shame! You are a disgrace to the name of Stuart!" a dozen voices cried out against me. "Who is not for us, is against us!"

"I believe," said McKenzie, very red in the face, and holding up his hand, "Mr. Stuart will find elsewhere company more to his taste!"

I bowed, and as I turned to go, a way was opened for me in the circle.

"Perhaps Mr. Stuart's interest is with the other side," said O'Brady with an evil smile.

I was feeling a trifle sick and faint at the ordeal I had come through, but the sneer braced me like a blow in the face, and now I was on firmer ground. I turned on him, and

very softly said : " I take you, sir. A remark like that, in the presence of ladies, betokens a man of circumspection ! "

Joan cried out : " Mr. Stuart came here at my invitation. I am to blame. I beg you will let my cousin go in peace ! "

" And I think, Mr. O'Brady, for a stranger you take a great deal upon yourself, and be damned to ye ! " said her brother, stepping to my side.

" You all heard what my cousin said. He is not against us. Simon, I will see you to the inn," said he, putting his arm through mine.

I cast one glance at O'Brady ; I was afraid for the good lad, my cousin. O'Brady read me, and returning his bow, I walked down the lane of guests who silently made way for me.

XI *"They Set a Combat them Between to Fight
it in the Dawning"*

"A FINE mess you have made of yourself now, Simon," said Malcolm, flinging himself in the chair when we reached the inn.

"Yes," I said, "it will be easier for me to find enemies than friends now. I wonder if I have one here that will share a bottle with me, for I found yon dry work."

"A dozen if you like, but, for a man in your shoes, I would say a pint of claret will be best. If I know anything, you'll be hearing from O'Brady!"

"Tell me what you know of him, Malcolm," said I, pushing the bottle his way. "The man's face stuck in my thoughts, and his persistence in picking on me, a total stranger to him so far as I know, was beyond my understanding."

"Och, he'll just be one o' the Irish that's come over, and I believe he is here wi'

letters from the Prince for the McLeod. But that's no' what's bothering me," said Malcolm gloomily. "D'ye know the man is a warlock wi' a rapier? Ye'll need all yer wits about ye in the morning, Simon!"

"That will explain a thing or two, but not all," said I. Malcolm could carry me no farther, and I found myself growing irritable with trying, vainly, to remember where I had seen this man with the bent nose.

"Here comes our man," said Malcolm, as a step sounded on the stair.

The door opened, and in came McKenzie, carrying a rapier under his arm.

He bowed ceremoniously, bursting with dignity and importance. "Your servant, gentlemen. I carry a message from my friend, Captain O'Brady!"

"I wish you well of your friend, O'Brady," said I. "Let us have your message; I could make a fair shot at guessing it."

"Captain O'Brady considers himself

deeply insulted by what you said in the presence of the company to-night ! ”

“ You are not afflicted with any difficulty in hearing, Mr. McKenzie ? ” said I.

“ My hearing is as good as any man’s,” said McKenzie, very high and mighty.

“ That being the case—and I am relieved to hear you say so—you could not help hearing what this Captain O’Brady—I would like to see his commission—said to provoke my remark ? ” said I.

“ O’Brady demands a meeting, unless you were thinking of sending him a written apology ! ”

“ I am not in the habit of apologising to gentlemen of O’Brady’s kidney, or his friends. I take it you stand for him as being a person I must not use my cane on, so I’m thinking it will have to be a meeting. I dare say my cousin, here, will arrange with you.”

I turned to Malcolm, who nodded surlily to McKenzie.

“ Your friend, O’Brady, is a bully, Mc-

Kenzie, and if harm comes to my cousin out o' this, let him look to himself. What is your pleasure in this cursed affair, Simon ? "

I handed him my rapier. " A yard or two of turf ; there's a sweet spot on the beach where the burn runs into the sea, east of the village. Quiet, yet only a step from where we sit. Shall we say six in the morning ? "

" I know the place," said McKenzie ; " it will do very well. We will be there ! "

The rapiers were measured, and no fault found with them. McKenzie, declining a glass of wine, went on his way. " And now I'm for bed," said I, clapping Malcolm on the shoulder.

" I hope ye sleep. I'm pretty sure I'll no'," said he. " And I don't think ye know what's afore ye. O'Brady's no' to be treated like ye serve me wi' the foils, Simon."

The sun was shining red through the window when I awoke, with Malcolm, fully dressed, shaking me by the shoulder.

"It's time ye were up, Simon," said he.

"You have been sitting up all night!" said I, surprised at his tousled hair and disordered cravat.

"Man, I'm thinking it a pity a cool blade like you is no' wi' us. We could do wi' a few," said he, watching me dress.

"I could wish that myself; we would have had your Prince back to France by this!" said I.

A sweeter morning for the business in hand, a man could not wish for. Not a breath of wind fluttered the leaves, yet there was a brisk fresh tang in the air like wine as I walked with the silent Malcolm through the village where the folks were still abed after last night's orgy. Nothing stirring save the flocks of sparrows, twittering and chirping in the hedges, and among the oat stooks.

Presently we came to the beach and found O'Brady waiting—it is always well to keep the O'Bradys waiting—and several more gentlemen, among them a surgeon from

Inverness. Some time was wasted, these gentlemen being of the mind to show me that the punctilios could be as sharply observed in the highlands as ever they were in France. These preliminaries over, we stripped and saluted.

The rapiers rasped against one another with a little grating tinkle, and in a minute I learned this man was of the premier force.

I know of no secret *botte* such as one often hears men talk about in the schools. On the other hand, I have known men who, by devoting endless time and care to the practice, made themselves masters of certain movements. Shortly I discovered O'Brady to be an adept at the "Glide." Again and again I felt that stealthy slide of his blade along mine which is destined to end in a thrust inside the guard. And each time I countered O'Brady's crooked smile grew less until it gave place to a dubious frown.

Suddenly he disengaged and gave ground a pace or two. I waited his pleasure to come

on again. Marking his approach, like a flash of light I remembered Ker, the narrow lane at midnight in Paris, and a tall bravo coming on with a catlike crouch and a straight arm. Off my guard for an instant that was like to be my last, I only escaped a deadly lunge by leaping back.

"So Captain O'Brady combines with his other activities that of midnight assassin in the streets of Paris," said I, as our blades grated again.

The villain saw he was recognised and pressed me with all his skill, plainly with the intention of stilling my tongue for ever. Filled with a cold rage at the memory of his attack on Ker, and his murder of the wounded bravo, I gave him the opening he sought, and as the point of his rapier slid towards my hilt, I countered with the twist and thrust of the "Croisé."

McKenzie caught him as he staggered back holding his side, a red patch spreading over his shirt, the blood trickling through his fingers.

I stood waiting while the surgeon busied himself with lint and bandages. “ Captain O’Brady is in no danger, I am glad to say. He will be about again in a week or two. But an inch or two higher up and it’s a dead man we would have lying here, Mr. Stuart ! ” said the surgeon, looking at me and then at the others like a man bewildered.

“ It is to be regretted I am a trifle out of practice ! ” said I, wiping my rapier.

To the company at large said I : “ You are disappointed, gentlemen, having, I perceive, counted upon a different ending to this morning’s work. Yet, if you only knew, there is something to thank me for. It is none of my business, but I might advise you to make some further inquiries respecting your friend lying there. Captain O’Brady is his present name, but I have met him before under another ! ”

Leaving them to ponder this piece of information, I saluted, and slapping my rapier home, turned on my heel to walk to the inn.

I had not gone a hundred yards when Malcolm caught me up. "Simon," said he, falling into step, "I have lost a night's sleep, but I am well paid with the sight o' their faces back there. Ye have given them something to think about, and I believe this is the best morning's work ye have done since you came home. I'll wager they'll take a second thought before they put a quarrel on ye again!"

"I had some notion like that in my head when I took him up last night," said I.

"Well now, I never thought that was your game. But what is the meaning of yon ye said about O'Brady?"

"Give me your company at breakfast, and I'll tell you."

"You say O'Brady came north on the McLeod business?" said I when we were seated at a pigeon pie, a dish of collops with ale, and oat-bannocks and cheese.

"That's the news I got o' him," replied Malcolm.

"Well, it may be true," said I. "There

is such a thing, I believe, as a spy taking pay from both sides, but judging by the way you take strangers to your bosoms, you don't go very deep into their credentials. The Lord help you with any plans you have made with O'Brady in your councils—that's what I say."

Then I told him of the encounter in Paris. "He will be no danger to you for a week or two, the surgeon said; but confront him with Ker, and lose no time about it—that is my advice to you."

"Ker is far away in Edinburgh wi' the Prince," said Malcolm.

"Ha! It's likely O'Brady would know that. Well, there's my news for you. Do what you like about it, but the man's a dangerous spy on you, and he is known to Ker and others by the name of the 'Whaup.'"

"He is well named, but I never heard tell o' it, and this will have to be seen to at once!" said Malcolm. "The Lord only knows what mischief has not been done

already, or how much we are in your debt. Ker here, or Ker there, I'll see what can be done about him myself."

"You'd better. O'Brady is no common spy," said I, admiring the resource and iron nerve that could take him into the highlands, into the stronghold of the Jacobites, and carry him smiling in the company of men where a slip would mean sudden and violent death. Yet, thinking it over after Malcolm had gone, as the information had come from one who declared himself not in sympathy with them, even now regarded as a traitor; in the absence of any who knew him, a master of the game like O'Brady might be able to divert suspicion and continue to hold his position in the good graces of the Jacobites in the North.

Well, as I have said, it was none of my business. I had enough troubles of my own now. The maid I loved despising me for the shame I had brought on the family, a leper in my own country. Yesterday I came through Petty greeted on every hand.

This morning, save Malcolm, I could not count on a single friend. The very men and maids about the inn served me with bent brows, and riding slowly through the village not a soul did I see on the road but a bairn or two. Only dim, white, staring faces appearing suddenly in the windows, watching me go past.

XII I Take Wine with my Lord Loudon

To Clunes I rode, and for the next two weeks lived like a hermit, seeing no one but the house-servants and farm-lads, taking up my time with the work of the estate. For company at night, Janet came in with her knitting. Indeed, if it was not for my housekeeper, I might as well be living on the top of Ben Wyvis, so little I would have known of the world beyond Clunes. But if a man would have news of the country-side let him go to his housekeeper. Of course, Janet knew of the night at Petty, and, very indignant at the way I had been treated, straightway changed her politics and became a Hanoverian ! I could hear her flyting on the maids for a pack of idle, feather-headed limmers, with their songs and havers.

“ Aye, my faith ! ” Janet would cry, “ it would set ye better to keep the lads at

home instead o' stravaiging aboot the farms, egging them on to 'up and fecht for Charlie.' A fine state o' affairs this, to be sure. What will ye be saying when ye see their corps hanging by the roadside, and their heads on the bridge when ye go in wi' the eggs and butter, and the crowdie. Aye, an' ye canna move in the heilan's for the Sidier Rhua¹ as I saw it all when I was a lassie in the '15."

To my certain knowledge, Janet, for days on end, never put her foot beyond the gate at Clunes. Yet she was a veritable news-letter of what went on in the town and the country-side. It was from Janet I had the news of the Frasers under the Young Master, besieging Fort Augustus. Of the Prince in Edinburgh, and the great doings in that city. And Duncan Forbes of Culloden, the Lord President in residence at Bunchrew.

Of Joan I had had no word since she turned away from me on that night at Petty. But Malcolm, Janet had told me,

¹ Gaelic for Red Soldiers.

was with the Master of Lovat. And O'Brady gone, no one knew whither.

Thus the weeks went by, with much intimidation and cattle lifting by bands of rievers from Moy and the West. From first to last, I lost over forty fat ewes and a dozen stirks before my Lord Loudon and the Lord President took order and hanged a few of these gentry.

So I come to an evening in October. Janet has taken her place by the fire in my sitting-room, plainly with something out of the ordinary in her mind. After some beating about the bush, said she, "Simon, laddie, ye'll no' take it ill if I ask ye have ye broken wi' Joan?"

"Not me, Janet," said I, "it will be the other way about!"

"Weel, I am sure ye'll no' be wishing the lassie any harm at all events, and I think ye better see her, Simon."

"I will not be very welcome at Alturlie these days. What is the matter with Joan, is she ill?"

“ Oh no, the lassie is well enough, but she might be in some danger in another way, if all I’m hearing is true ! ” Janet stopped plying her knitting-needles, and looked up at me with a grave face.

“ Danger ! What’s this you are driving at, Janet ? ” said I.

Janet rolled up her knitting into a ball and transfixed it with the needles. “ Ye know Jeannie, the kitchen lassie here, Chisholm the carrier’s daughter ? Well, her sister, Ishbel, is a table-maid at Bunchrew, wi’ Duncan Forbes. I dare say, Simon, ye know the way news o’ the gentry is carried by the lassies from one hoose to another ? ”

I nodded my head as a man having some slight knowledge of this.

“ Ah weel,” says Janet, “ ye’ll no stop the lassies clashing. Ishbel was here seeing her sister, and after Ishbel went home, Jeannie, a good lassie, comes ben to me wi’ a story aboot Duncan Forbes having my Lord Loudon to stay over the Sawbath wi’ him. The lassie was taking the wine into

the gentlemen after the dinner and she heard them talking aboot taking some o' the leddies up and jailing them in the Fort. And they mentioned Miss Fraser at Foyers, and Miss Joan and Lady MacIntosh hersel', no less ! ”

I took a turn about the room at the receipt of this piece of inside information, which I knew, for certain reasons, would likely be little short of the truth.

Better than Janet I could guess what was exercising the minds of the Lord President and Lord Loudon. There was the business of the old chief at Beaufort. Protesting his loyalty to King George and deploring the young Master's disobedience in raising the Frasers against his father's wishes. When, as any bairn knew, unless Simon, Lord Lovat, gave the word, not a Fraser in the land would have crooked a hand on a hilt for all the Princes in Christendom.

The Jacobites in the town hardly concealed their elation at the news of Gladsmuir, but of all the Prince's friends in the North, his

best recruiting sergeants were the ladies. No doubt of that. So it might well be that Loudon meditated taking some sharp measures with these firebrands.

“ I will see Joan to-morrow, no later,” said I.

“ Aye ! ” said Janet, “ a fine thing this, for folks to see their dochters up to the jail, merching between the Sidier Rhua like thieves and vagabonds. It’s a good skelping the lassies want. Many’s the time, when ye were bairns, and I showded ye in my airms, I thocht to see the day when Joan and you would make a match o’ it, and noo this business o’ Prince Charlie—and that’s the black business to be sure—putting bad blood between friends and neighbours, is like to end everything, and I donno what the world is coming to, indeed !

“ Joan is fond o’ ye, fine I know that, but she wouldna be a Stuart if she hadna a temper o’ her own. Mind that ; speak the lassie fair ; don’t be quarrelling wi’ her, Simon ! ”

Assuring Janet that whatever I said I would do nothing to rouse the Stuart temper, but remembering the circumstances under which I saw her last, I rode away next morning, dubious of the reception of my advice.

A mile west of the village of Clachnaharry I overtook a party of horsemen, and fitting exactly to my train of thought, discovered the leader of the party to be Lord Loudon, returning to the town after his visit to the Lord President.

My lord, knowing me, very kindly would have me to ride with him, and talked very pleasantly of the weather and the crops and so forth, until we came to the village. There, to breathe the horses, the road being very heavy, he halted his escort and asked me to join him in a pint of claret.

To be sure I was not deceived in thinking my Lord Loudon was taken so with my company, but that it was news he was after. So I was not surprised, after the landlord had bowed himself out of the room and left us to

our wine, when he said : “ Mr. Stuart, I have the news of what happened to you at Petty, a week or two ago, and I am glad to know of you as a young man well affected and not carried away by the temporary success, Mr. Stuart, of this young man and his deluded supporters. Your very good health, sir ! ”

Wondering what was coming, I bowed my acknowledgment of his courtesy and drank my wine.

“ Doubtless you are aware of how my friend the Lord President and I are struggling to hold back the hot-heads in the North here ; our labours have met with some success, but the price is unceasing vigilance, and we are much hampered in the good work by the enemy spies and messengers passing to and from between this and France ! Do you happen to have heard any word of a man named Ker ? ”

The question came like a pistol-shot, but feeling pretty sure my Lord Loudon very well knew of my landing off the *Gull* with

Ker, and was only trying me, without hesitation I said : “ I do know a man of that name, my lord ; in fact, I made the voyage from Dunkerque in the same ship with him, when I came home a month or two ago ! ”

“ Did he ever drop any hint as to the nature of the business taking him to the North ? The wine is with you, Mr. Stuart ! ”

Loudon was looking at me squarely. Filling my glass and passing the tankard, said I : “ From the conversation, I gathered he had an interest in the ship. Part owner, I believe, with his brother, who was the skipper.”

“ You met Mr. Ker in Paris ? ”

I was beginning to feel something of the sensation of a man on his trial, as I answered, “ Yes, Ker offered me a passage on his ship, and as the offer came at a needful time, I was obliged to him ! ”

“ You met with some adventures on the road, I believe ? ”

Here showed the hand of O'Brady, and I felt sick to think of that villain and the mischief he could do to my friends.

"It would appear, my lord," said I, "that anything I might tell you of my journey from Paris would be information at second hand. We were set upon by a gang of murderers, and we accounted for them. I believe I could make a guess at the source of your information, my lord!"

He turned away for a moment with a secret smile, then looking at me again, and seeing me watch him with a very set face, he said: "Tut, Mr. Stuart, you are a soldier, so don't be losing your temper. You are not so simple as not to know that you travelled in company with a very dangerous enemy of the State, and in assisting him you did the State a very bad turn!"

"They were bent on nothing short of murder, and I think myself very lucky not to be lying back there in France with my throat cut!" said I.

“Very lucky,” said my Lord Loudon, coolly; “it is not often the man detailed to attend to Ker fails us.” Then, I suppose, by way of smoothing me, he said: “Having served yourself, Mr. Stuart, you are aware that we who have the guidance of the affairs of the realm in our hands cannot afford to be too nice in our choice of weapons against the enemy.”

A faint flicker of a smile played about his tight lips, and that night in the Tête de Bœuf recalled in this cool fashion made me feel a little warm; but I had to keep on the right side of such a man as Loudon, so I replied: “I am not likely to forget in a hurry my experience with that department of State-craft!”

“And, knowing you now, I regret the inconvenience you were put to, and glad you got away with nothing worse than an unpleasant memory!” said he.

Inconvenience! I liked that word, thinking of yon set of murderous villains, and what happened to the drugged landlord.

“Faith, my lord, your satisfaction is no greater than mine,” said I dryly.

“By the way, Mr. Stuart,” said he, “the name reminds me. Have you any knowledge of Ker’s whereabouts at the present?”

“I have not,” said I.

Lord Loudon rose from his chair and stood for a moment looking out on the village street. He turned to me again, and said: “I could give you work, Mr. Stuart, if you are inclined to help. In going about among the people here, you might pick up serviceable information.”

I have had men at the point of my rapier for less, but though my face grew hot at the insult, I held my temper, and replied: “It is very little I can do; as you know of what took place at Petty, my lord, you must know I have scarcely a friend left. I am regarded as a traitor, and I doubt if any would listen to me!”

Then for a shot at finding out what truth lay in Janet’s news, said I: “My journey

to-day is to find out if I have any influence left in one quarter."

"Indeed? May I ask where you are going, Mr. Stuart?"

"To my cousin, Mistress Stuart of Altur-lie!" said I.

My lord looked at me, frowning heavily at the name. "I consider the women in this Jacobite business the very devil!" said he angrily. "A dozen of them can make more mischief than a regiment of spies!"

"My cousin will just be a young lady with her head full of romantic nonsense," said I.

"Dangerous nonsense, Mr. Stuart, that leads them to send white feathers to well-affected young men, and use every feminine device to drive them into the ranks of Charles Stuart. You may tell your cousin from me that there is a limit to the lengths we will permit even the ladies to go.

"And as for the men, by —— the limit is reached!" he swore through his teeth. "Let these spies and traitors look to themselves, for this day I start to rout them

out, and high or low, if I lay them by the heels, they shall swing for it ! ”

Then, swift as the passing shadow of a cloud on the hill-side in sunny, windy weather, the mood changed. He put on his hat and clapped me on the shoulder. With a smile said he : “ I wish you good luck with your cousin, Mr. Stuart. It is ill work fighting with the ladies ! ”

I was not deceived with this sudden change of manner, but more impressed than ever. Behind the smile and jovial manner I saw a hard, ruthless man, with no scruples where his duty lay.

We continued our journey to Inverness very pleasantly together. Coming to the head of Kirk Street he bade me good day, and rode with his troop up the Wynd to Fort George, leaving me to ride along the High Street, and out at the East Gate on my way to Alturlie, carrying with me, for company along the road, a picture of Lord Loudon, his face black with anger, and his sinister words ringing in my ears.

*XIII I Fall in With Some Gentlemen who
have Business With the Lord President*

It was about four in the afternoon, and growing dark, with a sprinkling of rain, when I dismounted at the door.

Giving my horse up to a stable-lad, I bade the maid tell her mistress I wished to speak to her, and waited wondering how she would receive me. I was not long kept in suspense. The door opened and Joan came in with a face on her like a graven image. Before I could get a word out of my mouth, said she : “ It will be my father you are wanting. He is east the way of Forres, and will not be back until Friday ! ”

“ I hope my uncle is well, and will find everything to his mind in Forres,” said I ; “ but my business will be with his daughter ! ”

“ I know of no business you can have with me ! ” said she.

I pulled out a chair. "If you will sit for a minute or two, I believe what I have to say will show you that you are mistaken there."

"I am very well, here," said she, remaining by the door.

"Joan!" said I, "don't be taking that high and mighty air with me; surely you must know that whatever I would say or do would be out of my love and regard for you. I rode into Inverness with Lord Loudon to-day——"

"The company sets a Stuart well!" said she bitterly, "but I wonder at your taste in telling it in this house. It is the taste that made me a laughing-stock in Petty!"

"You don't understand, I tell you, and I am not going to lose my temper. It is a serious business."

"Temper forsooth, who cares here whether you lose it or no!" said Joan.

"Do you realise that you are playing with gunpowder? Loudon warned me to tell

you that if the ladies don't mind their steps, some of you will be put under arrest ! ”

“ Is this your message ? ” said Joan, raising her voice. “ You can go back to my Lord Loudon and tell him to do his worst.”

“ Is this your answer ? ” said I.

“ You were a fool to come to me and think to get any other ! ” said Joan.

“ Ah well,” said I, taking up my hat, “ it is plain I have done my errand badly. I might better have stayed away, but the day is coming, and not far off, when you will be glad of the fools ! ” I should have held my peace there, but nettled at being called a fool for my pains, with my hands on the door, said I : “ After all, it's just possible that Lord Loudon may be right.”

“ What do you mean ? ” said Joan sharply.

“ Perhaps a little enforced solitude might be the best means of bringing some of you to your senses.”

“ Have you done ? ” she cried.

“ Perhaps you will tell them to bring my

horse ! ” Not another word would I say, but strode out to the porch and banged the door behind me. An angry man was I, waiting there, my mission worse than useless, and here was a black dirty night, with a rising wind and raining heavily.

Presently a lad with a cloak over his head came round with my horse. As I swung myself into the saddle, the door opened and Joan called out : “ It is an awful night, and foolish of you riding away in this weather. Will you not be stopping ? ”

She stood in the open door, the wind blowing her dress, and the voice was that of the old Joan, but I shook my head. “ I will be living up to my reputation of a fool,” said I, and rode off into the night. I am not sure, it might have been a trick of the wind, but I thought I heard a cry of “ Simon ! ” as I passed through the gate.

Reaching the high road beyond the shelter of the trees, we got the full force of the storm, and the horse, with more sense than myself, jibbed and would have turned

back to the warm stable. But, hot with anger, I put the spurs to him and rode on at a canter.

It was a mad thing to do on a bad road on a night dark as the pit. I had not gone a mile when the willing brute put his foot in a hole, and over his head I went, luckily enough, into some bushes. So there I was with a singing head, a horse dead lame, and not a house, save the one I had left, within two miles. Go back I would not, nor leave a horse in this plight. Then I remembered a half-ruined cottage with an old stable at one end, which must be within a hundred yards of where I stood.

It took me half an hour to urge my crippled horse to this place, where, taking off the saddle and bridle, I did the best I could for him in the dark.

Feeling about, I found some dry musty hay in a corner, where, sitting down, I made up my mind to wait for morning, or until the storm should abate. I have no mind of the time nor how long I had been

there, having fallen into a doze, soothed by the rushing sound of the wind, and the drumming of the rain when I was roused by the clatter of feet and men's voices about the ruin.

I was about to spring to my feet when I heard a man curse the weather, and call on someone to light the glim. I sank back in my corner, recognising the speaker to be a wild ruffling blade, one MacGillivray from Raigmore. Came the clink of flint on steel and in a minute the light of a lantern shone through a crack in the old wall at my ear.

The next voice made me clutch the hilt of my rapier. "So, the old fox has gone to his other den, and we have had all our trouble in this cursed weather for nothing!"

"Well, the night is young yet. Plenty time to nab him at Bunchrew before morning," said another. "Pass along that horn; what with lying among these infernal bushes I'm chilled to the marrow."

Very gently I turned on my side and peered through the crevice. The lantern,

dangling from a beam overhead, shone on six men grouped beneath it, passing from hand to hand a bull's-horn of spirits. I knew them all, MacGillivray, O'Brady, MacBean from Millburn, Sinclair, an Inverness man, and two Frasers from Beaully. As precious a set of brawling, hard-drinking rakehellies, with a double-dealing villain like O'Brady, as an honest man would wish to give the width of the road to.

And what did this talk of the Lord President mean?

"Well, it's got to be done to-night," said Sinclair, "the hunt is up for us, and by this time to-morrow we will all have to be out o' this and far away!"

"Aye, or swing, by——!" cried MacBean. "They nabbed McIvor to-day in Baillie's!"

"I would swing content, I think, if I had the man who laid the trap for us, here, under my hand, for one minute," growled Sinclair, with an oath. "The red-coats were searching every tavern when I slipped away this afternoon!"

“ This talk is useless, and time is passing,” said O’Brady. “ The question is, how are we to get to this place, Bunchrew, which, I understand, is on the other side of the town ? ”

“ Easy enough,” said another ; “ the river is low, we can ford it above the town, pick up the horses at Muirton, ride to Bunchrew, and before dawn be well on the road to the Master watching Fort Augustus.”

“ And what are we to do with Duncan Forbes when we get him ? ” asked another.

Hardly daring to breathe, I pressed my ear to the crevice to catch the answer to this.

“ You heard what was said. We will finish with him at Bunchrew, and burn the house over his corpse ! ” cried Sinclair ferociously.

“ But, look here,” said MacGillivray, “ the word from Lovat was to kidnap him.”

“ Aye, but accidents will hap—— C——! What was that ? ”

My blood running cold with horror, I had

risen to my knees to creep out. I had clean forgotten my horse, and the poor brute, hearing me move, had given a loud whinny that sounded like the crack of doom.

In an instant there was a rush of feet, and before I could clear the door or draw my rapier, I was caught, tripped, flung to the floor with two or three ruffians on me, and a hand feeling for a grip on my throat.

“Bring the light!” cried one.

I was rudely plucked to my feet and the lantern held to my face.

“Stuart!” they all cried, and stared at me in amazement.

They all looked at my horse, and one of them said, “Yes, and heard every word that was said in there!” A chill silence fell at that, and if ever I saw murder in men’s eyes it was then.

The first to speak was O’Brady. He looked pale and ill. “This is quite a surprise, Mr. Stuart,” said he with a cruel grin, “and it seems the bad luck is with you this time!”

“ I am feeling a bit surprised myself, at seeing you, and at your success in still running with the hare and hunting with the hounds,” said I, mustering up all my courage to meet what looked like certain death within the next few minutes.

The others still looked on me in grim silence.

“ Is it possible,” said I, “ that you don’t know this man for a Hanoverian spy, and that he tried to murder Ker in Paris ? ”

“ Spy here or spy there, O’Brady has explained all that,” cried Sinclair ; “ but I saw you ride into Inverness with Loudon to-day, after being closeted with him for an hour at Clachnaharry ! ”

“ Then,” cried O’Brady, “ this is the one that peached, and the man you were wishing you could meet a short time ago ! ”

“ If this is the man, here goes ! ” snarled MacBean, plucking a pistol out of his belt.

“ Would you do murder at that man’s bidding ? ” I cried. “ Whatever happened to-day was not through me ! ” and clutching

at a straw, I told them in words I cannot recall what passed between Lord Loudon and me, and the nature of my message to Alturlie.

MacGillivray thrust himself in front of MacBean. "I believe what Stuart says is the truth; he is no spy at all events. Put up that barker, MacBean. I'm no' in wi' killing him!"

"Ye would leave him go wi' all he has heard to-night?" said Sinclair.

"No, but we can truss him up and leave him here!" said MacGillivray.

"And when he's loosed by the first to pass here in the morning, what then?" cried someone.

MacGillivray, who seemed to be the leader of the party, laughed, and turning to the speaker, said: "Bah, what does it matter what happens in the morning? We'll all be far enough away by then!"

"You are fools!" said O'Brady, scowling at them, "and the time will come when you will rue letting this dog go."

"Maybe we are fools; how much so, perhaps no one knows better than yourself!" said MacGillivray, looking hard at O'Brady, whereupon the other turned away.

"Unbuckle the reins off that bridle, one o' ye," ordered MacGillivray.

Except O'Brady and MacBean, who was half-drunk, I believe the others were not sorry at the turn things had taken. They bound me with my own sword-belt and reins and laid me in a corner of the stable.

"Here!" said MacGillivray, holding the bull's-horn to my lips. "I believe ye'll be owing me a day in harvest, Stuart!"

I drank deep of the brandy, for I was feeling the need of it. "If ever that day comes I'll not forget this!" said I.

"Well, ye never can tell!" said he with a wild kind of laugh. "Come!" he cried, "we have lost time enough!"

And that was the last I ever saw of them. They all crowded out, and presently I heard them plunging along the road to Inverness.

XIV How I Carried the News to the Lord President

THE good brandy sent the warm blood back to my heart, and as the sound of their footsteps were lost in the storm I began to think of the Lord President and the deadly peril he stood in. And the thought of that, and what might yet be done if a man was free, nerved me to bend every ounce of strength in my body to the loosening of my bonds. See now what it was to be the best swordsman of my day in the Regiment of Picardy—a skill I thanked God for that night, though never did I reckon on it serving me in this way. Far beyond the ordinary, the years of practice had made this right arm and wrist of mine strong and supple as a good Toledo blade. I rolled there in the dark, twisting myself about this way and that, and after ten minutes of desperate straining and tugging,

felt the rain-sodden leather stretch, and at last, the sweat running down my face and faint with the furious struggle, I stood up unbound.

Without waiting to draw my breath, I set off, running my hardest in the dark, rainy night, stumbling and falling in the mire and puddles, and within half an hour stood beneath Joan's window, where a light showed, though all the rest of the house was in darkness.

I flung a handful of gravel scraped off the path, and at the second try the window was opened and she looked out.

"Joan," I cried softly, "this is Simon here; for God's sake come down and let me in!"

The window was hurriedly shut; in a minute or two, she opened the door, and I staggered past her and sat down fairly spent.

She followed me without a word, and lighting two or three candles, stared at me in open-eyed affright. No wonder; I got

a start myself, on catching my reflection in a mirror. My face was white and bleeding from a cut on the cheek, plastered with my black wet hair, and from head to foot my soaking clothes were spattered with mire.

Pulling myself together, noting even in that moment she was fully dressed and her eyes red as though she had been crying, said I: "Joan, does your zeal for the Stuarts go the length of condoning murder?"

"Are you mad?" said she. "What on earth will you be meaning? You have been set on! Oh, why did you not stop here when I asked you?"

"I mean this, and there is little time to tell you all, but I overheard this night a plot to murder Duncan Forbes!"

"Oh Thighearn!¹ Is this true, Simon?" she cried.

"It is this true!" said I, striking the table with my fist, "that if I cannot get to Bunchrew before them to-night, the old man that we know so well and was so kind

¹ Gaelic for "Oh Lord!"

to us when we were bairns will be dead, and his death lying at our door ! ”

Joan looking at me, her face white as a sheet, started back, clasping her hands together. “ The lads are gone home these three hours, Simon ; but we can saddle another horse ! ”

“ A horse would be no use, I might be stopped, and besides it would be too late. I could make no speed in this darkness ! ”

“ Then what on earth is to be done ! ” she cried, wringing her hands.

“ There is another way I have thought of getting to Bunchrew before them, and that’s across the sea. The boat is at the old place, hauled up on the beach I suppose, but you can get me the mast and sail and help me to launch her ! ”

“ But such a night as it is. Will you listen to the wind ? ” said Joan.

“ I have been out in her in as bad weather as this,” said I ; “ but if it was blowing a hurricane I would try it.

“ Now, Joan, time is passing. Get me a

cloak of Malcolm's and a mouthful of meat and drink—for I am minded I haven't broke my fast since morning—and I'll be off across the firth ! ”

Joan set meat and wine before me, and as I satisfied my hunger I went over the plan I had mapped out. I looked on the clock, marvelling at the hour as the events of the day flashed through my memory. It yet wanted half an hour to midnight. The tide would be coming in, and high water at two in the morning. With the tide to help me and this wind from the N.E., there was every chance, barring accidents, of my reaching Bunchrew first. For, by land, the way the conspirators would go, they would have to travel in the dark on foot part of the way, some twelve miles, whereas my way, it would be little more than half that distance. As a set-off to this, they had an hour's start of me, and with that thought I sprang to my feet.

I put on the cloak Joan had brought me, and wrapping something round her,

together we went out to the dark, windy beach. She got me the mast and little lug sail, and we dragged the boat down the shingle and got her afloat.

"Simon," cried Joan, steadying the boat as I stepped the mast, and hauled up the wildly flapping lug, "it's awful to see ye setting out by your lone on a night like this. Would ye not wait while I run for one of the men to go with you?"

"There's no time, even if you could get one; and besides, there's the reason that this had better be kept to ourselves. If it gets about, I might have some of the Lovat lads lying for me behind a dyke."

"Would you not take me with you?" she cried, clutching my arm.

I had only to say the word, for the lass was as brave as steel; but, "No, no," I cried, "you have done all a man could ask of you, and if I have the luck to get there in time, for all we are travelling different roads, you will find, when you think of it, this is the best night's work you ever did!"

“ Send a man for my horse, first thing in the morning. Good night to you, Miss Stuart, and thank you ! ”

Giving the boat a shove I clambered in, and taking a turn of the sheet round the cleet, in a moment she heeled over to the blast that struck her beyond the shelter of the cove.

Boy and man, I have sailed the firth in all weathers, but never at night in weather like this. The boat, an old one, but light and well built, leapt at the sea like a living thing, and sped like a gull across the stormy waters. There was a faint light about me from the gleaming wave-crests, but a boat's length was all I could see ahead.

The course I set by guess-work for the narrow entrance to the Beaully Firth. The wind was fair on my quarter, and settling down I watched with straining eyes for a light that might serve as a guide.

What with the care of the boat and looking out, I lost count of time, but in an

incredibly short space I saw a greater darkness ahead, and knew it to be the great bulk looming up of the Ord Hill. And soon I could tell by the shape of it that I was too far to the north. Altering my course, I swept into the Beaully Firth, missing Craigton Point by a stone's-throw. Now, save for the danger of being swamped by the heavy tide running west, the worst part of the sea was past. It is only a mile wide here, and for guides I had the lights of North and South Kessock.

Crossing to the south side in a long slant, and then along close in shore, I ran the boat aground at the nearest point I could judge to the President's house.

The high road from Inverness winds along the shore, and familiar with every turn of it, dark as it was, I found myself about two hundred yards east of my destination.

The rushing of the wind and the thresh of the rain among the trees sounded like the roar of surf breaking on the beach as I ran along the road and hammered on the

door of the silent house. At last a light showed, someone stirred within, and the door was opened an inch or two on the chain.

“ Who is there ? ” called a voice.

“ Stuart of Clunes, with an important message for his lordship. Let me in, Mac-Alister ! ” said I, recognising the voice of the President’s butler.

The door was opened wide enough for me to pass, and once inside, said I, “ Bar the door, and tell your master I must have instant speech with him.”

“ But my lord is in bed hours past,” said the butler, staring at my wild appearance and dripping clothes.

“ Go, man ! ” said I, putting a hand on his shoulder, “ I have just sailed a boat across the firth. Do you think I did that for diversion ? Rouse your master, and say it is perhaps a matter of life and death, and will not bear a minute’s delay ! ”

He hurried away without another word and very shortly came downstairs followed

by my lord in night-cap and dressing-gown.

“What is this, Stuart?” said he. “Man, ye look as if ye came out of the firth!”

“I have come across the firth, from Alturlie!” said I.

“On such a night!” he cried. “If I did not know ye for one of the sane men left in the country-side, I would say ye were mad. But not another word till ye take something to warm ye. MacAlister, bring brandy and hot water!”

I had my story told before the butler came back. When I came to the end with my sail across the sea, he stood with his back to the fire looking at me beneath his puckered brows.

MacAlister brought in a tray of decanters and glasses flanked by a silver jug of hot water and a sugar-bowl. Duncan Forbes mixed me a jorum himself.

“Mr. Stuart,” said he, when I set the empty glass down, “the hand of Providence is surely in this. It was my intention

and arrangements had been made for my return to Culloden House yesterday. They were changed at the last moment. And to think," he added, as if talking to himself, "I was to go on to Beaufort in the morning. Kidnap me, and he would have it all his own way in the north, for well he knows it is my hand that is holding them back."

"How many men are there in the house, my lord?" said I, breaking in on him.

He looked at MacAlister waiting by the door, who replied: "There will be just myself and the maids, my lord!"

"In that case," said I, "we can make no stand against six, perhaps more, desperate men. You must leave the house. I would advise you, sir, that we are wasting precious time. They may be here any minute!"

"I will make ready instantly, Stuart; but what about the servants, and where can we go? We will meet the villains on the road if we take horses to Inverness."

To all of which I replied: "The servants will come to no harm. It is only yourself

that is in danger. As for riding, that is out of the question. So I suggest you wrap yourself up, my lord, and I will undertake to land you at South Kessock within the hour ! ”

“ Come, MacAlister, and help me to dress,” said the President, hurrying from the room. “ I will be with you in ten minutes, Stuart.”

I helped myself to a glass of punch and stood by the window listening, and trying to pierce the darkness outside until my lord came back, wrapped to the eyes.

Bidding MacAlister show us out by a back door, we slipped through the silent house.

“ You will warn the servants, MacAlister, and when these men come, tell them your master was called back to Inverness, say three hours ago ; and for a last word, see there is no mention of my name in it ! ”

With that I took the President’s arm, for he was an old man. We crossed the road, and keeping well into the trees, stumbled along towards the boat. We had

nearly reached there, when, above the swishing and creaking of the trees about us, came the quick patter of hard-ridden horses. They galloped past, close enough for me to touch them with outstretched arm.

We listened for a moment, and the galloping ceased.

“Come, my lord,” said I, hurrying him down to the boat. “You see they have lost no time!”

Pushing the boat off, we looked back and saw lights about Bunchrew House.

Within the hour, as promised, I landed the Lord President at Kessock, none the worse, bar a drooking from the rain and sea-spray. We roused the inn, and after the gaping landlord had brought us brandy and water and went away for a coach to take us to the town, says my lord: “It is possible I will be owing ye my life, Stuart,” and gravely gave me his hand.

Hardly another word did Duncan Forbes say to me, but sat waiting for the coach,

and twirling his glass by the stem. The lines in his face set in a grim frown. I believe I could put a name to his thoughts.

In the days to come I remembered this picture of him sitting there, and I know that night's work put an end to his friendship and pleading with Simon, Lord Lovat. It was open war between them after that.

Reaching the town, my lord very kindly had me into the house, and very thankfully I accepted the invitation to sleep there. I went to bed feeling I had not lain in one for a week, and the very last thing I have mind of, before falling into a sleep, deep as death, was the watch in the street below my window crying : " Fower o'clock, and a could, wet, stormy morning ! "

*XV I Breakfast With my Lord Loudon and the
President, and Make a Poor Meal of It*

A SERVING-MAN moving about the room, seeing I was awake, told me the hour was ten, and his honour would be glad to have my company at breakfast.

He brought my clothes dried and cleaned, and hot water for shaving, whereupon I dressed, feeling a trifle stiff, and went downstairs.

My lord stood with his back to the fire, behind a table set for breakfast ; but I did not look to find him talking with my Lord Loudon there.

Here were the two men upon whose shoulders rested the heavy task, and small was their thanks in after-days, of keeping quiet the clans that had not yet declared themselves, Duncan Forbes doing his work with shrewd, kindly, patient persuasion ; Loudon, hard, ruthless man, by terror.

The conversation stopped and both gentlemen looked up as I entered the room, vaguely discomfited at the sight of Loudon.

"Well, Stuart!" said Duncan Forbes, coming round the table and giving me his hand very heartily, "I am glad to see you looking none the worse for last night's adventure."

"I hope, my lord, you are none the worse yourself," said I.

"Indeed then, very little I think, thanks to you. I have been telling the story to my Lord Loudon here. I believe you are already known to one another."

I bowed to his lordship, who nodded his head, his grim face breaking into a smile. "I have the pleasure of knowing Mr. Stuart," said he.

A footman came in with a tray of dishes, and when we were seated and the man gone, said Duncan Forbes: "His lordship has a proposal for your consideration, Stuart."

"The proposal," said Loudon, catching the ball, "arises out of your very brave and

loyal conduct last night, and to which I am convinced my lord the President owes his life."

"I cannot bring myself to think they would have gone that length, Loudon," said the President, wagging his head.

Said Loudon, turning to me: "The trouble with the President is, that he is slow to believe evil of any man, whereas I am as sure as I am sitting here that this plan was hatched in Beaufort, and those villains you so fortunately frustrated intended nothing short of murder."

I might have satisfied both gentlemen that Loudon was probably correct so far as one or two of the rascals were concerned. But now the danger was past, and having, in my story to the President, left out the more sinister words I had heard from Sinclair, I could see no good in telling them now. God knows, there was likely to be enough bad blood between highland men for many a day to come without my adding to it.

So I shook my head, saying: "I over-

heard all that was said, and there was no word of anything beyond kidnapping my lord, and keeping him out of the way for a while ! ”

“ Huh ! ” growled Loudon, looking hard at the President, “ you see, there is no doubt where the orders came from. Your friend, Simon, has a weakness in that direction¹ ; but this brings him to the end of his tether ! ” the harsh voice grated. “ I will take instant measures, and if Lovat gets any more rope it will be to his craig !

“ And now, Mr. Stuart, here is what I would say to ye. You have shown by your conduct, since you came home, that you are among those who have preserved their sanity in the wave of madness that has swept over this part of the country. On the occasion of our last meeting you will remember I asked if you were of the mind to help us ? ”

¹ It is common talk in the highlands that the chief of the Frasers kidnapped the lady he married.

“ I do, my lord,” said I, “ and I believe your offer contained a hint that the help you would require of me would be in the nature of spying upon my friends ! ”

“ Well, well,” said he, frowning at his plate, “ I believe I did suggest something of the kind, and I regret it ”—he bowed to me—“ but now I offer you a commission as an officer in the service of His Majesty the King ! ”

So far I had taken very little breakfast, though I had sat down to that table hard set. Well, I had all the breakfast I wanted now, as I searched my brain for words to decline this offer, and in so doing give as little offence as possible.

“ My lord, I thank you for your good opinion of me ! ” said I, “ and the offer, but when, with all respect, I beg to decline it ”—Loudon’s face set like granite—“ I ask you to consider my position here ! ”

“ Your position here, sir, is no different to mine, or Culloden’s there, or any other man who has the welfare of his country at

heart. I must tell you, Mr. Stuart, that in a time like this there is no middle course for honest men, and your refusal to consider this offer leaves your conduct open to suspicion, to say the least of it."

"My lord," said I, beginning to lose my temper, "it ill becomes me to refer to it, but surely my conduct since I came home, that you have been kind enough to commend, places me above the suspicion you hint at!"

"Don't forget, Mr. Stuart, that, had it not been for you, a most dangerous Jacobite spy would have been laid by the heels, with documents that might have been more valuable to us than a victory on the field of battle!"

I felt the ground slipping from under my feet. "I had no knowledge of what the man was carrying. I only saw a fellow-countryman in a strange land in peril of his life!" said I.

"A dear mistake for us, for which I offer you a way of making amends."

I turned to Culloden : “ I have only one or two friends left to me now, as matters stand. How many will I have if I take this commission ? ”

“ Refuse it, and the mistake you made may be a perilous one ! ” Loudon cried.

“ If this is the way to treat a man doing, in his own humble way, what my lord the President is doing in his, I might as well——” I hesitated for a moment.

“ What ? ” cried Loudon, leaning across the table.

“ Trying to keep the peace,” said I, recollecting who I was talking to.

“ You had passed beyond that, Mr. Stuart ; you were saying that you might as well——”

“ Gently, gently, Loudon ! ” said Duncan Forbes, holding up his hand ; “ ye make a bad recruiting sergeant ! ”

“ There is such a thing, Mr. Stuart, as a loyal subject’s duty to his King ! ” said Loudon, frowning heavily at me, with drawn brows.

“ Ah yes, my lord,” said I, “ but then it would be my duty to turn my sword against my own flesh and blood. You, my lords, are great gentlemen dealing with high affairs of state. I am a simple man who can only follow what his conscience tells him. I can appreciate your position, my lords ; I beg of you to try and see mine. This miserable rebellion will be crushed—as a soldier I see that ; but afterwards, if I accept your offer and live, what will be my life here ? I will be the scorn of old friends and foes alike ! ”

In my excitement I had risen from my chair, when, “ There, there ! ” said Duncan Forbes, clapping his hand on my shoulder, “ sit ye down, Stuart ; if Loudon does not understand ye, I do, and ye need say no more about it. I told ye how it would be, Loudon, and, damme ! ” he added with a chuckle, “ if I were forty years younger I might be out with the kilts and claymores myself.”

The Lord only knows what might have

been said only for the diversion caused by this piece of good-nature on the part of Culloden.

“ You are a pair of sentimental fools. I am not sure which is the greater ! ” snarled my Lord Loudon, shaking his finger at us. And, so saying, he rose from his seat at the table, and turning his back on us, walked to the fire.

“ Where will you be for the day, Stuart ? ” said the President, taking my arm and convoying me to the street door.

I muttered something about a lame horse at Alturlie. He turned with his hand on the door. “ Now ye’ll not be cast down by what his lordship said to ye. His bark is worse than his bite ; but I would add this, knowing better than he does what influences may be at work on ye. Mind, my son ! ” said he, laying his hand on my shoulder, “ keep clear o’ this thing. That young man will fail, as his father before him did. Many will hang high, many’s the head will moulder on a pike,

and the brunt of it will fall on this poor land of ours. By keeping clear, the time may come when ye may help to soften the blow ! ”

I bade Duncan Forbes good-morning, and, having little recollection of walking there, found myself at Baillie's, where I called for a glass of brandy and a pipe and tobacco, feeling the need of something to soothe my mind.

*XVI I Ride to Make my Peace with Joan—and
Fail Therein*

I ORDERED the landlord to bring me some breakfast, and having satisfied my hunger, lit another pipe and sat pondering on my interview with my Lord Loudon and the President, and my own position, which, taking all into consideration, was become well-nigh impossible, and likely to become altogether so if, in addition to making myself an outcast among my own people, I was to find myself under suspicion by the other side.

Well, many a man in Scotland in the year of grace 1745 found himself in a like pickle, and seeing no solution to the problem, I made up my mind to cross no bridges until I came to them.

Calling for the reckoning, I sent to the vennel for a horse. I had two things needing attention, in order, if possible, to

keep tongues from wagging. The first, to get the boat back to Alturlie, and the second, to ride out there, as no matter how Joan and I might differ, she would be anxious to know the outcome of my adventure. So when the lad came with the horse I sent him with a message to an old seaman to sail the boat home.

I rode out by the Eastgate, only drawing rein on my way to look in at the ruined cottage. Two or three bits of reins on the floor of the stable reminded me sharply of my ordeal there.

Joan came to me quickly as I looked out on the bowling-green. "I have ridden out," said I, "thinking you would be glad to know that I was entirely successful last night."

"Oh, Simon, don't be standing there talking to me like a schoolmaster reading out a lesson, and me never closing an eye all the night!" said Joan.

Then in a softer voice, "Of course I am glad, you might know that, and I

think it a very brave thing you did. Cullo-den and the rest of them will be glad to have you on their side," she added bitterly.

"Not yet," said I, thinking of the breakfast I did not eat that morning.

"Well, I suppose it will be only a question of time till we see you marching with the red-coats. A fine sight that for folks, to see a Stuart of Alturlie in that company!" said Joan.

"The folks that are looking for that may train their eyesight. I march with neither!" said I.

"It will go hard with you, Simon, when the King comes to his own again!"

"Ah, when!" said I.

"Do you know," said Joan, her eyes shining with enthusiasm, "that the Prince will soon be setting out with his army for London?"

"An army of a few thousand poorly armed clansmen. I wonder at the way you talk. Has Edinburgh, the old capital of the Stuart Kings, risen in his favour? I

have heard no word of the lowlands flocking to his standard, nor the English rising. Joan, do you think I cut myself off from all my friends here and quarrelled with you for a whim? If I had seen any sign of the people wanting the Stuarts back I would not be here, but outside of the highlands not a man has risen. The people have forgotten them, or remember the old persecutions under the Stuarts, and I tell you their day is past."

"It will be a good thing the Prince and the men about him have stouter hearts than some in the north here," said Joan, tapping her foot on the floor.

"I understand what you would be hinting at," said I, "but, stout heart or faint heart, I have marched for days through country-sides where naught was to be seen but the blackened walls of farms and villages, and the bones of the people whitening the fields. God send the like may never come here, but the thought of that nerved me to do what I

did last night, for I tell you the day is coming when the highlands will be needing men like Culloden ! ”

I might have saved my breath to cool my porridge. A man makes a mistake in preaching to a maid like Joan. She said nothing while I delivered my sermon, but sat cold and proud, and I don't know how she might have answered ; but as I finished came the scraping of horses reined up on the gravel outside, and the voices of men and women talking and laughing.

Rising to the window as Joan left the room, I saw, dismounting at the door, Miss Fraser of Foyers and her brother and two other ladies with McKenzie of Kessock, and Chisholm of Culduthel. All leading lights in the League of the White Cockade. Fraser, very handsomely dressed, made an elaborate bow to Joan, saying something that appeared to please her vastly, and they all stood talking and laughing very merrily.

“ We are not your only visitors to-day ? ”

said Fraser, looking at the lad walking my horse up and down.

“ It will just be Mr. Stuart calling about a horse he left here yesterday ! ” said Joan carelessly. I might have been a pack-man. I did not wait to hear the answer, but taking my hat came to the door.

“ Will ye not stay for a dish of tea ? ” said Joan, stepping aside.

“ Thank you, cousin, but I believe I will be getting back to Inverness,” said I.

“ Mr. Stuart took his breakfast with Loudon and Culloden, it is likely he will be taking his tea in the same company ! ” said Miss Fraser, smiling mischievously at the others.

I might have known the news would get about.

“ Oh, you did not tell me that ! ” said Joan in high disdain.

“ We were talking of other matters ! ” said I.

“ Och, you would not expect Mr. Stuart to tell you what passed, high matters of

state and so forth," said Fraser. "But I suppose," said he, smiling triumphantly and slapping his boot with his riding-whip, "the conversation would turn for a while on the march of the highland army into England. It would be interesting to know what the gentleman had to say to that!"

I am always more at ease talking to men. Turning to Fraser said I, "As it happens, the conversation did not take that turn, sir. If it had you may easily guess the answer!"

"Faith, I don't know that I could," said Fraser.

"We might have expressed a hope that the clans will find the same ease in getting out. Personally I have my doubts on that point!"

I had mounted my horse and was about to turn away, but pulled up, taken with the giggle of these fools, and what appeared to me, in the mood I was in, a contemptuous smile on Fraser's lips. Very handsome did Joan look, and keenly in that moment I

felt the disadvantage that was mine, as I looked on Fraser standing, with what appeared to me an air of possession, at her side. He was all that I was not, in the eyes of a woman. An easy gentleman in their company, a splendid figure of a man, tall, fair-haired, handsome, blue-eyed, with a quick wit and a neat compliment ever at the tip of his tongue. How he must loom in the eye of Joan !

I stared at him steadily with black, envious rage in my heart—rage at Joan, rage at all the world. Brave as steel, a pretty gentleman, yet knowing well he would be at my feet in half a dozen passes, Fraser looked me squarely in the face. A minute I sat on my horse, with I know not what words calculated to sting him forming in my brain. Then, with a shiver as though the air had grown chill, I looked at Joan, and the evil thought passed.

Gathering up my reins, I bowed to the silent company, and rode slowly away.

*XVII I am of Some Assistance to Simon, Lord
Lovat*

A YOUNG man deep in love with a maid who has just cast him off may think, as I did riding home from Alturle that evening, that nothing much worth while is left for him in life. My horse, better of a sprained shoulder, followed me to Clunes with never a message. I gave the lad who brought him a polite note of thanks to take back, and that I thought was the end of all between Joan and me.

Yet, when one comes to think, it is curious, if a man be sane in mind, and hale and sound of wind and limb, how small a space in the day the very worst of our troubles takes up after the first bitter wrench is over. There are the common everyday cares of life, the matters of eating and sleeping, the getting up and lying down, and a man's work, the great

cure and solace for most ills in this world. And of work there was plenty at Clunes. The harvest had been an abundant one that year; the root crops were still to be lifted, the sheep to be brought home from the hills to the low ground against the winter, hedges to be mended, ditches to be cleaned out, and the thousand and one things on a farm that are neglected during harvest-time, that need tending before winter sets in.

All these matters kept us busy and my mind occupied. So November passed and winter was come with hard frosts, and the peeweets and golden plovers, driven from the hills by the bitter weather, were gathered in flocks feeding along the beach.

In all this time I had gone no farther than the inn at Bogroy, which stands east a mile from Clunes on the road to Beauly.

Being now, in a manner of speaking, cut off from the world, no news came to me of what was going on in the south country. Nor could I gather much at

Bogroy, which being a halting-place for drovers and cattle-dealers, a sort of half-way house between the great cattle market at the Muir of Ord, and Inverness, is generally a main place for news.

To be sure I knew of the march of the clans into England, but for all that I could learn of the fortunes of the Prince and his army, they might have marched off to another planet. But on a day in December, when the hard frost of that winter had been with us for three weeks, and when, for lack of company, I was smoking a pipe with the landlord at Bogroy, there came a stir on the road to Beaully. We were called to the door by the rub-a-dub of drums and the wail of pipes. A column of infantry marched by, headed by my Lord Loudon himself, looking dour and black as thunder. Marking the files as they swung past, nine hundred men I reckoned, made up of MacKenzies, MacLeods, and two full companies of red-coats.

I had to wait until the next day for the meaning of this display of force. The column passed Clunes on their return march to Inverness. A great coach lumbered along in the centre of the column, and in it sat Simon of Lovat and Gortuleg, the chief's right-hand man.

That night Janet, bringing in my supper, told me of Lovat living in his own house in the town, whither I suppose Loudon had brought him to have the old chief under his eye.

For some days, going about Clunes, I amused myself picturing the plotting and intrigue going on under Loudon's nose in that house of my Lord Lovat's, which was a very rabbit-warren for back doors. Soon though, things began to look serious. A word or two picked up here and there from travellers to the west led me to think there was that in my Lord Loudon's head likely to prove anything but amusing for Simon of Lovat.

So, curious to learn what I could of the

truth of the business, on the twentieth day of the month I rode into Inverness. And as a spur to my curiosity, riding up the Bridge Street, I marked a guard of red-coats posted at Lovat's door.

Stabling my horse in the vennel, I walked down to the bridge. McRimmon, if anybody, would know what was afoot. I found him at the river end of the street, talking with one or two merchants, and gathered from the conversation that the guard had only been posted that morning.

"And what's come ower ye this long time, Simon?" says McRimmon, as we walked down to the house, "and what will be the meaning o' yon, think ye?"

"I am here seeking information. What do you know of this business of Lord Lovat's yourself? Some queer stories are going about, McRimmon," said I.

"It's easy seeing ye are no' often in Inverness, Simon. Hae ye no' heard o' the disarming?" said he.

"Ye see, it's this way. Lovat got the

orders to disarm the clan weeks ago, and he kept putting them off and putting them off, until now all the Fraser lads are off wi' the young maister ! ”

“ Then it's not very likely Loudon has got the arms ! ” said I.

“ Arms ! ” chuckled McRimmon. “ It's just a joke. Aboot a dozen old firelocks that micht have been used by the lads in the '15 have been given up, that's the disarming ! ”

Said I, “ It would seem that Lord Loudon bringing the chief in has some difficulty in seeing the joke ! ”

“ Ah, weel,” says McRimmon, refreshing himself with a pinch of snuff, “ what can he do ? The lads are gone and the arms wi' them. The door is locked, but the horse is gone ! ”

“ For a man whom I was given to understand is keeping his feet clear of politics ye seem to be pretty well informed on what is passing ! ” said I, taking a chair.

“ Och ! ” says McRimmon, setting out

the wine and glasses, "the disarming is common town talk, but I will be hearing bits o' news now and then, o' others that are no' keeping their feet so clear; aboot a lad that crossed the firth on a dark night no' so long ago, for instance. Weel, here's to him," nodding his head at me and gravely taking off his wine.

"So the news of that has got about, and another black mark against me!" said I.

"How could ye think such a thing would be kept a secret," said McRimmon, "wi' a lass and servants and the inn-keeper at Kessock all in it? But as for a black mark against ye, I would not say that—ye are a daring deevil, Simon. Faith, I mind the night it was—lying in my bed listening to the wind. The Frasers micht be having it in for ye, but barring them, no man, woman, or bairn would wish any harm to come to Duncan Forbes o' Culloden!"

"Well, it seems the Frasers have got something else to think about now," said

I, "with their chief a prisoner in his own house!"

"Och, what can Loudon do wi' the old lord? The clan is up and away!" says McRimmon.

"There's no telling what my Lord Loudon can do!" said I, "but from what I know of him, he might find a way of turning the joke, as you call it, into something very different for Simon, Lord Lovat."

There was a new saddle to order and one or two other matters, and merchants to see, so I left McRimmon, promising to call in on him on my way home.

From one cause or another, so much time was taken up that the hour was late and the bridges closed long since when I was free to call on McRimmon, intending to ask him to put me up for the night.

The chain was on the door and I rapped with the butt of my riding-whip. McRimmon himself answered.

"Is it you that's in it, Simon, is there anybody wi' ye?" said he, holding up

the candle and peering out. " I thocht ye would be home hours ago. What's brocht ye here at this time o' the nicht ? "

" Aye, it's me that's in it, McRimmon, and there's nobody with me. As for what brought me, am I to tell you here on the door-step, and the cold like to freeze a man to the marrow ?

" What's gone wrong with you, McRimmon ? " said I, for the old lawyer still held the door, as if undecided whether to let me in or shut it in my face.

" Och, aye to be sure, Simon ; come in, man, come in ! " said he, unhooking the chain, and the moment I crossed the door he shut it and put the chain up again.

" What the deuce is wrong with you ? " said I again, for this was not the usual, ready, cool McRimmon standing with his back to the chained door, the candlestick wabbling in his fist, but a man in a state of uncommon excitement and indecision.

" Well, ye see, Simon," he quavered, his eyes straying to the door of his private

room, "I—I will be having unexpected company to-night, and——"

"Oh, if that's the case, McRimmon, I can get a bed at Baillie's," said I.

"No, no, ye needna go, Simon ; but wait ye here ; ye will excuse me a minute," said he, putting the candlestick on a table.

He trotted away to his private office, and standing there wondering what all the whispering and mysterious conduct of McRimmon meant, I heard a man say, "If that's the sort of man he is, we might ask him. It can do no harm, at any rate."

At that McRimmon came out. "There's a gentleman here, Simon, that would like a word wi' ye !"

I followed him, feeling in my bones that I was to hear of some Jacobite business ; all the same I was surprised to find four men seated at McRimmon's table, all Frasers, one of them Gortuleg himself.

I drew back for a moment with my hand on my hilt, a wild thought in my head that McRimmon had led me into a trap.

Gortuleg, a tall, strong, handsome man in tartan trews, rose and held out his hand, saying, "Though we may not see eye to eye with Mr. Stuart, it is always an honour to meet a brave man!"

I bowed to this, wondering what was coming next as he made me known to the others.

"To be frank with you, Mr. Stuart," said Gortuleg when we were seated, "your coming here at this moment, and from what we know of ye, has decided me to ask your help in a matter of pressing importance!"

I could have laughed only for the deadly seriousness with which he regarded me. "That is a strange thing to ask of me, sir, seeing you appear to know what I think of the rising. I need hardly ask if it will be in connection with Lord Lovat?" said I.

"It is. I understand what is in your mind, Mr. Stuart," said Gortuleg, "but this is not an attempt to ask you to join

in any plan against the Hanoverian forces. I tell you, on my honour, that if the Lord President himself were in Inverness, which most unfortunately he is not, the situation would not have arisen, and if it had, he would approve of what we would do ! ”

There is no denying I was impressed with Gortuleg’s manner. His voice shook with emotion, and a deep murmur of assent came from the others.

“ I am still in the dark, sir,” said I ; “ but before you tell me more, may I say that surely it is strange your asking me, of all men in Inverness, when you might find so many others only too ready to help.”

“ I know, sir, I know ; but time presses, the streets are full of patrols, none of us here but my good friend McRimmon and yourself know the town, and where are we to find the help that we need ? ” said Gortuleg, rising from his chair and taking a pace or two about the room. “ Where,” said he, resting his hands on

the table and looking at me, his brow puckered with anxiety, "when perhaps it is a case of minutes, or at the uttermost an hour or two. For, if the life of my lord is to be saved, what we have to do must be done long before the dawn of another day!"

"Oh yes, Mr. Stuart," said he, in answer to my look of astonishment, "that is what I mean, no less. You would see the guards at my lord's door. I have it, sir—no need for me to tell you how, the information is certain—that he is to be taken to the Fort, and, once there, my lord is a dead man!"

Whether Loudon had the power to take such extreme measures with a man of Lovat's rank was beyond me to say; but on his shoulders and on the Lord President's lay the heavy task of holding back the clans that had not yet come out. There was the MacLeod. He was one of those at the meeting of the chiefs at Beaufort. A feather thrown into the scale might

turn the balance there, and send the MacLeod and his thousand claymores and many another to join the Prince.

So, it being a time when the sternest measures would be justified, Loudon, a man with a heart of stone where he conceived his duty lay, might go to any lengths in order to strike terror into the hearts of the waverers.

Thinking of this and Gortuleg's words, two pictures rose before my eyes. The first when I was an urchin staying for a holiday in Beaulieu, of seeing a very stout old gentleman in a vast periwig distributing boddles from his sagging pockets to the bairns in the street, and patting me on the head and giving me two when he learned my name was Simon, like his own.¹

Then I saw the same old gentleman with his back to a wall in Fort George facing a firing party of Hanoverian soldiers. And at that second picture there was no thought

¹ This was a custom of the old chief of the Frasers in his periodical journeys among his people.

of any consequences, but to do what I could for my lord's deliverance.

There are some, I know, who, in reading over these memoirs, will lay them down and looking up, will say, "A plague on the man! My faith! he does not appear to know his mind from one week to another, but blows hot and cold. To-day active on the side of the Hanoverians, to-morrow running his neck in a noose for the sake of the Jacobites."

To all of which I will say even so, and will offer no excuse beyond this—I was young and neither clever nor much given to the weighing of consequences, but a plain soldier knowing something of his trade, and with, I freely confess, as may easily be seen from these writings, my heart in one camp, my head in the other. So, where it will be seen the heart guided the head, I would ask them to remember the times, the family I came of, and the country I lived in; and then, if they would still hold me strictly to account, humbly

bow to their sterner sense of the right and wrong of it, and hope that it may never be their lot to be placed in the same quandary.

Said I, " You have some way of getting his lordship out of the house ? "

" We have him in the house here, Simon ! " was McRimmon's astonishing reply, motioning to the door leading to his private quarters. " Getting him this far was easy enough, after he had given out that he was for bed. It was only a matter of getting him through a window and through a back garden or two. The bit is to get him clear o' the toon ! "

" Safety for his lordship lies across the river ! " said I.

" Once across the river we have horses and help waiting us there ! " said Gortuleg.

We talked of this plan and the next, but to every one thought of some obstacle arose that there was no getting past. The man himself was the main difficulty.

My lord was eighty years of age, of such unwieldy habit that it was a question if he could sit a horse, or his legs carry him half a mile without help. Behind us lay the town swarming with patrols. The road to the south along the river-bank was barred, for that way we would have to pass the guard at the bridge-end. Down the river it was the same; a great brazier stood in the road below the church. A boat was out of the question at that hour of the night, and a guard at the river mouth. There remained the bridges closed for the night.

Now, for such as do not know the pleasant town of Inverness, with its clear, shining river flowing through it down to the sea, be it known that in all its length there are only two bridges. One, the stone bridge of many arches which spans the Ness below Fort George, the other a wooden structure crossing it at the Merkinch, a mile from the river mouth. We might hold my lord till the morning,

when always, since martial law came into force, there was a great concourse of people waiting to cross the minute the bridges were opened. While we cast about for some plan of smuggling my lord across the bridge in the morning, my thoughts were busy with the stretch of the river below the stone bridge and the church. My memory went back to schooldays and long-forgotten school-mates.

I broke into the talk of getting his lordship across the bridge in the morning. "There is another way," said I, looking at Gortuleg and the other three Frasers. "There you are, four strong men; if you had some sort of a litter I know a place where you could carry him across on your shoulders and not wet your belts!"

"Are ye sure o' that, Stuart?" said Gortuleg, starting up.

"I have never waded the river in winter," said I, "but the water is low with this long frost, and many's the time, as a boy fishing for parrs, at the place I have in

mind, I have waded the Ness for the fun of it, when the water was no deeper than it is to-night ! ”

“ Where is this ford ye talk of, Stuart ? ” said Gortuleg.

“ Three minutes’ march down the river from the door here,” said I.

“ By the Lord, then, the chief is saved ! Show us the place, Stuart, that is all I will ask of ye, and if ye will come wi’ me, we can acquaint my lord of what we would do ! ”

At a table, whereon stood wine and glasses, sat Simon of Lovat with his hands on his knees, his face hidden by the great periwig that hung down on his breast.

He looked up as the door opened. “ Hey then, Gortuleg ! ” said he in a high, quavering voice, “ who is this gentleman ? ”

Gortuleg introduced me, and in a few words explained the plan of getting him across the river.

“ Fegs, ye’ll mind it’s no’ a dainty lassie ye will hae on your shoulders ! ” said the

old lord, with a little laugh. "Ye think it can be done wi' an old man o' my bulk, Mr. Stuart?"

"I do," said I; "there is the risk of getting your lordship wet, but very little of that with five strong men to carry you!"

"Ah well, beggars canna be choosers. I will be risking more than a dooking, staying in Inverness wi' my Lord Loudon so unfriendly. So, when ye are ready, gentlemen, we'll be on our way, ower the water and west the road, where the air is more kindly to Simon of Lovat, who is very much indebted to ye, Mr. Stuart."

When all was ready, McRimmon let us out, thankful I believe, and small blame to him, to see the back of such a dangerous guest. We had to halt once in the shadow of the cottages, to let a patrol go by, and about a hundred yards above the church I bade them rest, for here was where we had to cross. The patrol returned, and presently the light of the brazier beyond

the church was shut off by their figures grouped about it.

"Now is our time, follow me!" said I, leading them across the road and down the bank into the icy water. With many a stumble on the slippery stones, but no greater mishaps, we gained the farther side, and hoisting his lordship up the bank, four weary men laid their burden down in a narrow lane leading west from the river.

When they were breathed Gortuleg whispered an order, and two of them stole away like shadows down the river-bank.

"Mr. Stuart, that was a lucky thought of yours, and Loudon may whistle for his prisoner the morn, for by then we will be far beyond the reach of his arm. I have sent the lads for the ponies and a litter, and on this side we'll no' be wanting willing arms to help us into the hills!"

"In that case I will be getting back to our friend, McRimmon," said I.

"Ye think that will be best?" said Gortuleg.

“ I do, and back the way we came. There will be a stir across there in the morning. Many saw me in town late last night ; the bridge guard will be examined, I might be missed, and I would have some difficulty in explaining how I left ! ”

“ Mr. Stuart will be saying good night to us, my lord ! ” said Gortuleg, turning to the silent figure in the chair.

“ Aye, man ! ” said the lord, “ and how are we to thank ye, Mr. Stuart ? ”

“ By saying nothing about it, my lord ! ” said I.

“ Well, sir, silence will be best to-day, no doubt ; but there’s another day coming, and Simon of Lovat will keep ye in mind ! ”

*XVIII Tells, with Other Matters, of a Visit
from an Old Acquaintance*

BENT now on getting back, and the sooner the better, I swashed into the river, keeping an eye, as I waded across, for any unusual stir in the neighbourhood of Lovat's house. With my mind on what might happen there, and the dark, I must have moved up-stream. Finding I was getting into deep water, and trying to steady myself against the strong current, a stone turned under my heel, and down I went with a resounding splash. To anyone on the bank, the sound might have passed for a leaping salmon, but in the struggle to regain my feet, encumbered with my riding-boots full of water, the splashing in the silence of the night might have been heard at the bridge. Whether it was heard there or not, I cannot say. All I know is, that unlucky patrol heard me. A hoarse bellow

came from the bank. "Hallo there ! What boat is that ? "

I was a good fifty yards from the bank, and feeling sure they could not see me, I stooped, and carefully turning myself about, began to go back.

A sharp order was barked, followed by the rattle of the patrol handling firelocks. Again came the shout. "Ho there, that boat, pull ashore at once, or we fire ! "

My only hope was to wade on, making as little commotion in the water as possible, and I had made perhaps a dozen yards when the order came, "Fire ! "

The volley flashed and almost I went down with a blow on the left arm as if I had been struck with a club. If ever a man needed his wits about him, I needed them there in the middle of the river, with this arm numbed and helpless, dangling at my side. Setting my teeth, I went on picking my steps and at length gained the bank.

Making some sort of a rude bandage

with my cravat, and buttoning my arm in my coat, I pushed on across the fields.

Remembering as in a dream, plodding through the silent village of Clachnaharry, but how I reached Clunes from there, I cannot tell. All I know is, they found me lying at the door. I had sense enough left, as they carried me to bed, to tell Janet to keep the servants from talking. She could be trusted to do that, and it was given out that I had fallen from my horse and sprained my shoulder. The ball had struck above the elbow, tearing an ugly flesh-wound, but no bones broken, and thanks to Janet's care and surgery, I was up and about the house in a day or two, carrying my arm in a sling, little the worse for either wound or ducking, but a trifle shaky from loss of blood.

What bothered me now was the lack of news from the town and McRimmon's silence. On the third day, however, here came the clerk Dougal with a letter from his master. Much disappointed, I found

it only a document dealing with the renting of some pasture land requiring my signature, and half a dozen words to say he was abed, sick.

In my eagerness for news, and thinking the clerk might have something to tell, I told him to sit down. "You will be the better of a dram after that cold ride!"

"Weel, sir, thank ye, sir," said he, looking up with that eternal grin on his face, "it was a cowld ride to be sure, and I wouldna say no to a drop of the craytur!"

"McRimmon tells me he is abed?" said I, pouring him out a stiff glass.

"Aye, but he was doon the stairs for a while this morning; it'll no' be anything sayrious, I'm thinking! Ye have had an accident yersel', Mr. Stuart," said he, with his eye on my arm.

"Yes, a sprain through falling from my horse," said I.

"Och, aye, to be sure! Would it be the beastie ye left in the vennel?"

I shot a glance at the fellow, wondering

what was behind that grin of his, as I said, "No, another horse."

"Horses are kittle cattle whiles. Here's your very good health, Mr. Stuart, and hoping the sprain will no' bother ye long."

"And what's the news from Inverness, Dougal?" I asked.

"Och, just the talk o' Lovat's escape. Ye would be hearing o' that, of coorse!" said he.

"You surprise me!" said I, filling his glass again. "I have heard no word of it."

"Ye tell me that, sir? Och then, there's the great news! His lordship is ower the hills and far away. The talk is, he was gotten oot o' the hoose by a band o' Frasers helped by someone in the toon, and ferried across the river in the night. The patrol fired on them in the river, and they found tracks o' them and blood on the west side in the morning. Aye, and there's a reward oot, and the red-coats are riddling the west side for a man wi' a bullet wound on him!"

“ They will have a hard job to find him now, I would think ! ” said I.

The fellow put down the empty glass, and lugging out a snuff-mull, refreshed himself with a pinch. “ Ye would wonder ! ” said he.

Carefully putting his snuff-mull away, he buttoned his coat and stood up. “ Weel, sir, Mr. McRimmon told me to hurry back, so I’ll be for the road again, and thank ye for the dram, Mr. Stuart.”

Janet came into the room as I stood by the window after Dougal had gone. The housekeeper at Clunes was emphatic and outspoken where her likes and dislikes were concerned. “ McRimmon’s man is in a hurry, surely. He wouldna stop for a bite o’ denner in the kitchen. No’ that it pits me aboot, for I canna stand the sicht o’ the sleekit whitterack,¹ an’ I wonder at McRimmon having sich a cray-tur aboot him. A’m sure he’s no’ honest. Ye never know whether it’s a girn or a

¹ Weasel.

grin on the monkey's face o' him. Come ben, ye're denner is set oot, Simon."

Watching Dougal ride away, I had an uncomfortable feeling that Janet was not far out in her estimation of him.

Well, I had made one mistake in letting him see me. After dinner, still disturbed in mind, I made a second. I wrote a short note to McRimmon asking him to come out to Clunes as soon as he felt able, and added a word or two of warning as to what his clerk might know or suspect. This I sealed and despatched by one of the lads, with orders to give it to McRimmon himself. As I was afterwards to find out—though, thinking it over, it would have made no difference: what is to be, will be—McRimmon never got my letter. The dolt of a lad gave it to the clerk.

And now, with news reaching the highlands every day of momentous events in the south, I forgot all about it. News of the march into England, the total lack of support from the Jacobites there, and

at last the retreat of the highland army from Derby. We heard of Cumberland hard on the heels of the retreating clans, and the old English General Wade ready in the north to bar the way back across the border.

With a map spread out on the table I would spend hours measuring the marches with an eye to the danger of that army at Newcastle on the flank of the retreat, and I told myself that only a miracle could save the Prince and his little army. Then came an express with news of the clans safe back across the border. To this day I am puzzled to know how Wade blundered. Of a surety my old Marshal Saxe would have shot him ; but there it was, the miracle had come to pass. McRimmon himself brought me the news. It was his first visit since Lovat's escape, and I made him stay the night with me.

I astonished Janet by telling her to get a new rokelay for herself, and gave orders for a feast. I sent a dozen of wine and

whisky to the kitchen, and we made merry at Clunes that night.

McRimmon went back to Inverness next morning, and that afternoon the long frost broke with a high wind from the east and heavy snow. Late at night, with the household all abed, I sat in my room hearkening to the wind rushing among the tall bare trees. I must have fallen into a doze, when I sat up at a shout that rose above the beat of the storm. I went to the door and peered out into the smother of whirling, drifting snow.

A strong voice with a familiar ring in it called out from the road. "Is that yoursel', Mr. Stuart?"

Flinging a cloak about me, I ran down and unbarred the gate, and through into the light from the door strode no less a personage than James Ker.

When the man was divested of riding-boots and cloak and sat over against me by the fire with a glass of punch in his fist, I asked him what he did in these parts, so far from the Jacobite army.

“ We are marching north ; ye might ca’ me the advance gaird, Mr. Stuart,” said Ker. “ Foreby I hae the task o’ finding a ship that seems to hae lost hersel’.”

He drank the punch and, pushing the glass away, sat for a minute or two staring at the fire. Ker was a changed man. The strong face wore a stern look, the lines were deeper, and he slumped in his chair in an attitude of utter weariness of mind and body.

“ Aye, sirs ! ” said he, looking up and about him with a tired smile. “ It’s changed days since I sat here a few months ago that seem like years ! ”

“ Tired, ye say ? Tired is no the word for it, Stuart. Tired o’ the fools and rascals, and o’ seeing the wreck and ruin o’ all we worked for. Aye, there’s no use in me saying one thing and thinking another—we’ll see the thing oot to the bitter end, but A’m ’feared the cause is lost ! ”

“ Are matters come to such a pass as that ? ” said I. For, now the Jacobite

army was back in Scotland, I entertained the hope that further bloodshed might be prevented by the Prince giving up the venture and the chiefs coming to terms with the Government.

Ker did not answer my question, but sat frowning at the fire, and I did not repeat it, feeling that if he had anything to tell me he would do so in his own time and way.

I filled the glasses, and looking up, said he, " It's good to be sitting wi' ye again, Stuart. I was minding the noo, o' yon nicht in Paris. Ye was a bauld yin, but ye had that I liked as well, ye had sense. It is a quality no very common among the men I hae been wi' these few months past. I knew what was in ye're mind when I tried to get ye to throw ye're lot in wi' us. Ye were right in keeping clear o' it, though by what I was hearing"—he looked across the table at me—" ye havena kept altogether clear. Ye were asking if things are in a bad way, and I'll tell ye.

Once or twice it looked as if we would win oot. There's a caird or two to play yet, but unless a miracle happens, the game is lost. And how, ye would ask? Jist the way any game is lost. The want o' sense in the players!"

He drank some punch and said, "If ye care to hear, and I'm no' keeping ye from ye're bed, I'll tell ye the story o' it."

"Fill up your glass. I can listen until morning!" said I.

"It'll no tak' that long," said Ker, "and it's no sae nice that a man would care to mak a lang story o' it. It is jist a tale o' stupeedity and jealousy, and chances flung awa, one after the other. The first was in the beginning, in no' settling wi' Cope when we had him in the hollow o' oor hand here in the north. If we had done that, a' the clans in the north would have been in wi' us from the beginning. Then we beat him at Glads-muir. But what was done? Precious weeks flung awa, daidling in Edinboro'.

When we did march on England, instead o' going by Newcastle where we could hae made collops o' yon auld doited General Wade, and so brocht the English that were for us in, we gang by Carlisle ! ”

“ That was a terrible mistake for the Prince's staff to make ! ” said I.

“ Staff, ye say ! ” Ker's face set in a heavy frown. “ If this business comes to wreck, there's the rock we split on. The staff, the Irish, the Sheridans and Sullivans, and Hay that is quartermaster, and secretary Murray, the two-faced fox ! It beats me hoo the Prince lippens tae them, but he does, and they are at drawn dirks wi' Lord Murray.

“ Eh, man Stuart, there's a lad for ye that kens what should be done and the way to dae it, but he gets the cauld shoulder frae the Prince and sees his plans altered time and again. And why, ye would ask me ? Jist for one thing : my Lord Murray is as straight and true as his claymore, but he is no' a soople man. Stuart, he's the

only man among them a' that kens, but he has a dour temper, and canna help showing his contemp' for them.

"So ye may ken hoo things are at Headquarters!"

"And if it is a fair question," said I, "what is the plan of campaign now, and what do you in the north, Ker?"

"Fair enough," said Ker. "Lord Murray is for falling back into the hills and drawing Cumberland after him."

"It is their best plan without a doubt," said I, picturing the swift-moving highlanders in their own familiar country, swooping down on the slow-marching Hanoverian columns lumbering through the passes, encumbered with all the impedimenta of a regular army.

"Aye, there's no much wrang wi' the plan, but——" Ker shook his head and for a minute stared silently at the fire.

"Ye see, Stuart, it's this way," said he with a wry grin, "they heilan' countrymen o' yours are kittle cattle tae

drive. They McDonalds and Frasers, and Camerons, and a' the rest o' them. In the field, better men never drew steel, but when the fechtin' is done they hae to be soothered like bairns. Ye never ken what pooder magazine ye're gaun tae blaw up. There's auld world quarrels and friendships between them. Touch a Fraser, an' ye nicht get the length o' a Chisholm dirk between ye're ribs. Ye manna pit yin afore the ither, each must hae his place—that he got fra the Lord kens wha, long syne—Bruce it seems gae the McDonalds the right o' the line in the field. Forget ony o' they points and ye hae the whole camp bizzin' like a beeskep, the lads glowering at yin another like snarling tykes. Tak' mutiny; if a Cameron disobeys an order, no' a man daur lay a finger on him but Lochiel. If the MacRaes tak' it into their heids tae gang hame for a week, hame they'll gang, an' the deil himsel' canna stop them.

“Aye faith, they're kittle cattle, and

if Lord Murray is no' backed up by the Prince, there's no anither man in his army that ken's the guiding o' them !

" An' the Prince is badly in need o' siller. That's hoo I come to be sitting here. Hae ye heard o' the *Hazard* ? Weel, after we captured her and named her the *Prince Charles*, she was sent to France. We got news o' her sailing wi' arms and money for us ; but where is she ? That's the bit. She has either been nabbed or had to run for it. It is just a sample o' the bad luck that seems to be following us ever since Gladsmuir. If she has given them the go-by, the chances are she has gone north aboot through the Pentland Firth. So, I'm for the west wi' a few lads that ken the coast, hoping to fall in wi' her thereabouts ! "

" Where are your men ? " I asked.

" No' far awa, at the inn back there a mile or so. We hae been riding hard, and men and horses will be the better o' the rest.

“ And that ’minds me. What is this story about Lord Lovat ; will ye tell me ? ”

“ Oh, just that he has slipped through their fingers,” said I.

“ Loudon will be angry man, nae doot ! ” said Ker. “ We came north by Loch Ness and halted to-day a mile or two south o’ the toon. We fell in wi’ an auld man comin’ frae Inverness, and my lads got ‘tearing the tartan’¹ wi’ him. I’m told there’s a reward oot, and they ken the man that helped them to get the old lord awa.”

As he said this Ker leaned forward to the fire for a light to his pipe. There was nothing in his manner to tell me he knew more than he had just said. All the same, after lighting him to bed and thinking it over, in some way I connected his last remark with McRimmon’s man, and mine was an uneasy pillow.

¹ Talking in Gaelic.

XIX *James Ker Repays an Obligation*

It was still snowing when I came downstairs to find Ker had gone out, leaving word with Janet that he would be back to breakfast. That meal over, he said, "Wi' your permission I will quarter myself on ye till the snow blows over. We will march in the evening."

"You are welcome to quarters here as long as you care to bide," said I heartily, being well pleased with his company. So I spent the morning for the most part listening to Ker, who being a seaman and much travelled, ere ever he came to take a hand in this Jacobite venture, spoke shrewdly of the ways of men and business beyond the knowledge of a man who had only a few years' campaigning in Europe behind him.

Dinner passed, and Ker was deep in a wild tale of privateering on the Spanish

Main when the story was broken off short and we started to our feet as Janet hurried into the room crying, "Oh, Simon, the Sidier Rhua!"

We sprang to the window, and there saw an officer and half a dozen troopers riding through the gate. My first thought was for Ker. "Here," said I, throwing open a door, "out this way! Janet, there, will take you to the back of the house; a few steps and you are into the trees with the hill above you. Hide yourself and I will find a way of sending you word."

Ker caught up his hat and cloak, and buckling on his belt and hanger, followed Janet. "If," said he, pausing at the door to thrust a brace of pistols in his belt, "it should turn oot it is no' me they are after, put off all the time ye can wi' them!"

I closed the door behind them, but before I could give a thought to what Ker had said, there was a thundering tattoo on the door, and a shout of "Open in the King's name!"

The officer and two troopers had dismounted at the door. I heard the officer demanding from the quavering maid the whereabouts of her master, and next minute their heavy footsteps clumped along the hall.

"I know you, Mr. Stuart," said the lieutenant; "you are under arrest, and must accompany me to Inverness!"

"What is this for, lieutenant?" I asked, as taking a slip of paper from him I read the order of arrest signed by Lord Loudon.

"I know nothing beyond my orders!" said the lieutenant, with his eye on my wounded arm. "And I must ask you to make ready with as little delay as possible. The roads are heavy, and it will be dark before we reach the town."

"Ochone the day! What will be the matter, Simon?" cried Janet, coming into the room and looking from me to the officer and the stolid troopers standing without the door.

"Just a mistake, Janet," said I, though

well I knew it was no mistake, "but I must ride to town with this gentleman, before it can be put right!"

I turned to the officer: "You have had a cold ride, sir. You will take a glass of wine and permit me to send out a dram to the men while they bring my horse around?"

"No objections to that, Mr. Stuart," said he, seating himself in a chair.

Janet left the room; perhaps half an hour was taken up in giving the party refreshments, and then we set out for Inverness with four or five inches of snow on the road and the sky clearing.

I rode beside the lieutenant, behind two troopers, with the rest bringing up the rear, my brain busy with what I would have to say for myself when confronted with my Lord Loudon; yet unable to see clearly nor knowing what the evidence might be against me.

McRimmon's man was in it, of that I felt sure, but how much did they know? Where did McRimmon himself stand? I

thought of Loudon robbed of the chief instigator of rebellion in the north bent in crushing without mercy any signs of favouring the Stuarts, and more sure of his ground now the clans were in retreat. The more I thought of it the blacker my case looked in all this uncertainty. I raised my eyes to the tree-clad hills on my right with something like fear in my heart, and a mad plan forming in my brain, of a sudden wheel and a dash for the trees.

Before we had travelled a mile past Bogroy inn, I had made up my mind to try it. Though the odds were ten to one I would get half a dozen musket-balls in my back before I had gone a dozen yards, yet I knew of places along the road where the trees came very close, and there was a chance. Quietly gathering up my reins, I marked each little bend.

Thus we came to within a mile of Bunchrew and a sharp turn where the leading troopers passed out of sight. When the officer and I reached the bend we found the

leading troopers halted. A few yards ahead the road was blocked by one or two heavy, thick fir-trees fallen across it. My heart leapt at the sight, and warily I looked about. Men would have to dismount to remove the obstacle; my chance would be while they were busy.

The lieutenant gave orders for the leading troopers to clear the road. With every muscle braced, I was in the very act of scanning and measuring the few yards of open ground between me and the tree-clad hill-side. Already I leaned forward in the saddle; in another instant I would have dashed the spurs into my horse's flanks, when a single musket-shot rang out. The ball whined over our heads and a sharp, stern shout, "Halt!" came from behind the fallen trees.

Troopers and prisoner, we were all crowded together. Staring first at the trees, and from that to the glint of musket-barrels now showing among the undergrowth on the hill-side where a wisp of

grey smoke trailed slowly through the branches, the officer pushed his horse to the front and ordered his troopers to handle their carbines. At that moment a man stood out from the trees, and now we could see behind him more men covering us with levelled muskets. "Keep your hands awa frae they holsters!" he called out, "and order your men to drop their carbines. Besides what ye see behind me there's a score o' shot covering ye from the hill-side, and the first wrang move a man o' ye mak's 'll be ye're last!"

The lieutenant looked about him and swore under his breath at the hopeless situation, for there on his left within a stone's-throw was the empty beach. Without waiting for his order the carbines thudded, one by one, on the snow. "Who are you, and what do you want?" he called out.

"King James's men," answered Ker, advancing with a pistol in either hand. "We promise ye good quarter, but let you and ye're men dismount, all but that

dog who rides wi' ye. Dismount!" and at the harsh shout, officer and men got off their horses.

Ker waved a pistol and four well-armed highlanders came out from behind the barricade. "That's oor man," said he, pointing a pistol at me, "one o' ye gaird him. Put a bullet through his heid, and be damned to him, if he moves a finger."

"A'm sorry to set ye afoot," said he to the officer, "but it's the fortune o' war ye'll understand, and we need the horses. Tell them that sent ye, we hae a crow to pick wi' yon traitor on the horse, and ye're welcome to what's left when we are done wi' him. Now march!" said he, sternly pointing a pistol along the road to Inverness.

The crestfallen officer, muttering a word or two, led his troopers past the grim, alert highlanders who watched them trudging heavily in their great jack-boots through the snow, until they came to another turn in the road.

When the last red-coat disappeared, said Ker, with a grin on his hard face, " I doot, Stuart, ye better mak' up ye're mind to tak' a cast west the road wi' me, for, by all accounts, Loudon is of the mind tae mak' short work o' ye ! "

" I'll be thinking that myself," said I, grasping his hand. Two other highlanders now came down from the trees. Gathering up the carbines, they mounted the horses, and we all rode back to Clunes.

Had the Lord President been in Inverness I would have gone straight to him, but he was far away in Edinburgh. So we primed Janet with a story to tell, in the certain event of a strong force visiting Clunes within the next few hours. Being all in the dark as to McRimmon, I told Janet to warn him of his man Dougal. Lastly, I left with her certain instructions regarding the ordering of Clunes, not knowing when I might see it again, and in a clear frosty night rode off to the west with James Ker and his men.

*XX Tells of What I Heard on the Morning
of the 16th April, 1746*

LONG weeks passed, weeks of fruitless search and waiting in wild winter weather and the early spring along the bleak rocky shores of the Minch, and the first half of April was nearly gone ere I rode again with Ker through Beaulieu and saw the chimneys of Clunes above the trees.

Inverness was now in the hands of the Jacobites, and Loudon across the firth grimly waiting what might betide, so, finding Janet and all well, we rested the night at Clunes, and early next morning rode on to the town.

We made a rendezvous to meet later, having no knowledge yet of what was afoot, and parted at the bridge. Ker to the Jacobite headquarters with the doleful tidings of the capture of the *Prince Charles* with all her munitions of war and money

to pay the grumbling highlanders whose pay was long in arrears. I to find McRimmon, eager for news of Joan and how matters stood regarding my own affairs.

And as I came down to the old lawyer's door, who should be coming out, very gay with Stuart ribbons and cockade, escorted by McRimmon bowing and chuckling at some pleasantry, but the lady herself.

"Talk o' the deil," cried McRimmon, lowering his head to stare at me over his barnacles.

"My, it is Simon!" said Joan, the roses in her cheeks.

"Just Simon!" said I, bowing to the lady, "McRimmon's eyes are failing him!"

"Deil or no, ye hae given us the deil's own time wondering what's come ower ye these weeks past," cried McRimmon, "and if my old eyes are failing, then the sight o' ye has done them good. Come in boy, and Miss Joan ye'll stop now for a glass o' wine and a bit cake o' ye're own baking to welcome this stravaiger."

We all went in, and McRimmon seeing me look on a strange face at the clerk's desk, said, "Aye, Dougal is gone. I made short work o' him, and not before time, the sly villain!"

"Is your arm better, Simon, and where have you been all this time?" Joan asked me, as McRimmon, excusing himself for a moment, left the room.

"The arm is well again. I have just been running up and down the earth, Joan, seeking and not finding."

"That will be a pity, Simon. What was ye seeking and not finding?"

"Oh, a way out of my troubles," said I.

"I was hearing that Lord Loudon himself was put about thinking ye murdered in the hills. So if that's all your troubles——"

"Ah, but that is not the worst of my troubles," said I, gravely shaking my head.

"My gracious me, this day! What else can be bothering ye then?" enquired Joan, looking at me with wide-open eyes.

"Well, I'll tell you, Joan; this is the way of it," said I. "There is a man I know that dearly loves a maid, but a cloud lies between them, seeing they hold different opinions on certain matters, and another thing, it may be the love is all on the man's side. How would you advise this poor fellow?"

"I think," said Joan, casting a quick glance at the door, "that it will be the gentleman's part to change his opinions."

"McRimmon will be here in a minute, Joan," said I. "But what if the gentleman cannot do that without being a lie to himself?"

"Does he want the lady to be that?" Joan asked, quick as the crack of a whip.

"He knows, he is sure, the lady is in the wrong," said I hurriedly, hearing McRimmon's foot on the stair.

"Indeed!"—and oh, but she was the sarcastic maid—"was ever the like of that heard? The Lord give us a good conceit of ourselves! I think, Simon

Stuart," said Joan, picking up her gloves and riding-whip, "this man you are asking advice for, is the kind I would like to shake. He is sure, forsooth!"

"What's this, what's this? Ye are no' quarrelling already, are ye?" cried McRimmon, coming in with the wine and a basket of cake.

"No, McRimmon, I was just telling Joan here of a man I know and she does not appear to approve of him," said I.

"He must be a fool then, and that's his misfortune," says McRimmon, pouring out the wine and handing it round, and so the matter passed, and I was no farther forward.

We drank to one another, and I asked Joan if I might see her on the road to Alturlie.

"Thank you, but I am going to Cullo-den House with Lady MacIntosh. There is a dance to-night; Malcolm and some old friends will be there. Perhaps you would like to come out and bring that man with

you ; he might learn something that would make him change his mind ! ”

To this I made no reply, but held the door, and Joan passed out, returning my bow with a very haughty inclination of her pretty head.

“ And now, what is your news, McRimmon ? ” said I, when we were seated again.

“ Well, so far as yourself is concerned, there’s no’ much wrong,” said he. “ Yon villain Dougal found out one or two things and, putting them together, laid the information against ye, but they knew nothing for sure, and when word came back with the red-coats of what happened at Bunchrew, and ye taken away to be murdered, A’m told Loudon was sorry. Of course Janet came in the next day and gave me your message. But there, that’s all past and done with. The Prince is at Culloden House. The great question now is, what’s going to happen next ? And on that point ye will be as wise as mysel’, for nothing seems to be known

here, more than Cumberland left Aberdeen on the 8th of the month and we only heard of it yesterday."

So here was the 15th with the Hanoverian army within a march or two of the town, and they were dancing to-night at Culloden.

Much disturbed at what I had heard and seen in the streets, I went back to Clunes.

That evening a messenger, riding at full gallop to the west, flung a letter over the gates as he thundered past. It contained a message from Ker asking me to meet him in the morning at McRimmon's, and the news of Cumberland halted at Nairn.

Little guessing what was in front of me, I told Janet I might not be home for a day or two, and eating an early breakfast, rode off, reaching the town about seven o'clock, on this long-to-be-remembered morning of the 16th of April in the year of grace, 1746.

Putting up my horse for an hour, I walked about the town dumbfounded.

Companies of sullen, weary highlanders stood or sat about in the open streets. Every tavern was crowded with men clamouring for meat and drink, and harassed officers and orderlies hurried about giving orders that were received with counter-demands for food, or flat disobedience.

I had seen this before in my time, and burning to know where Joan was or what she was doing on this day that carried disaster on the very air of it, I hurried down to McRimmon's.

There I found at breakfast with the old lawyer, Ker, my cousin Malcolm, and Fraser of Foyers. And, judging by the flushed faces and boisterous greetings of the last two, the decanters on the table had not been idle. There was even a watery twinkle in McRimmon's eye. But Ker looked dour; no quantity of wine could affect that iron head.

"The great day has come, Simon!" cried Malcolm, filling me a bumper of claret. "Here's to the lads wi' the kilts;

by this time to-night we'll be hunting Cumberland and what's left o' his Hessians ower the hills. Down with it; man, ye must drink success to us this day and come up to the Moor wi' us ! ”

“ I will drink, hoping and wishing the best for all ! ” said I, taking the glass.

“ Ye could not say fairer than that, Stuart ! ” said Foyers.

“ From my heart I could not say less, the Lord knows ! ” and I drank the wine.

“ What is your news, gentlemen, may I ask ? ”

“ The clans are mustering on the Moor above Culloden ; the Master of Lovat will be here within the hour, and we march wi' the Frasers ! ” said Foyers.

“ And where is your sister ? ” I asked, turning to Malcolm.

“ At Culloden, with the rest of the ladies,” said he.

I looked at them all, amazed. “ What madness is this ? ” I cried, springing to my feet.

“ Och, the ladies are safe enough ; what harm can come to them there ? ” said the young fool.

“ Aye, if you win, they are safe enough maybe ; but is that so certain ? Have you thought of a retreat, or if the day goes hard with you ? ”

“ There ye go, Simon, for a croaker,” cried Malcolm. “ Man, I tell ye, we will do this day to Cumberland, on the Moor of Culloden, what we did to Cope at Glads-muir. Fill up and have the other glass ! ”

“ I want no more wine, and neither do you, my lad,” said I, catching up my hat.

“ Hark ! ” said Fraser, standing up. “ That will be the Master ! ” said he, as we listened to the drone of pipes and drums beating a quick step on the bridge.

“ What do you think of it ? ” said I to Ker, as we came to the door and saw the bridge filled from end to end with Frasers.

“ I am hoping for the best, and that will be to play wi’ Cumberland for a day or two. Wi’ half the men to muster yet, and

what's here wearied and hungry, it will be playing a losing game to fecht him to-day!" said Ker.

"D'ye come wi' us, Stuart?" cried Fraser, buckling his belt.

"I ride to Culloden House. It may be a man will be needed there," said I, and turning on my heel, without another word I walked quickly away.

With Ker's last words in my mind, I forced my way through the rabble of weary, semi-mutinous highlanders. Offer battle to Cumberland's disciplined battalions on the open Moor with his army in this condition? *Quos deus vult perdere, prius dementat*, the old line learned in schooldays, came back to me with terrible significance, as I flung the saddle on my horse.

With only one thought in my head, and that how soon I could get to Culloden House, to avoid the tumult and throng of men now mustering in the streets, I turned my horse's head down Kirk Street and so

east along past Seafield, and by the sea beach, to the Nairn road.

This road was almost deserted, as the main road to Culloden ran along the high ground to the south. Thus, and riding at full gallop, I reached without hindrance the bridle-path that turns off the road and leads up through the woods past the cottages of Milltown to the Lord President's house. A high, steep-roofed mansion, with a broad flight of steps leading up to the main door, it stands with its wide lawn in front completely surrounded by a wood of tall trees. It is always quiet and peaceful there, with naught to break the silence but the cawing of nesting rooks, of which there are many about, and the cooing of wood-pigeons off in the woods.

But this day there was a strange eeriness in the silence. This peace and quiet, this pleasant house standing amid its flower-beds and well-ordered grounds, sheltered by the woods from the shrewd east wind, the peacock preening himself on the wall—

all presented a grim contrast to the deadly game about to be played out up there on the bleak, wild, wind-swept Moor, less than a mile away.

I skirted the lawn, keeping out of sight of the house, and came to the stable and byres at the back where the trees came right up to the buildings. Stabling my horse, I paced to and fro among the trees, debating what I should do. Going up to the house now, I might only lay myself open to rebuff. And if the highlanders won the day, there would be no need and little welcome for me. All things considered, I would wait; wait and watch. So at a point from where I could see the house, and across the lawn to the woods sloping up to the Moor beyond, I sat myself down with my back to a tree and smoked a pipe. And as I sat there, only the good God and myself knew how tormented and swayed, now this way and that, was I, with the thoughts that passed through my brain.

And the main thought, always it came back to this, was I doing right? I, Simon Stuart, a soldier with some years of honourable service behind me, skulking here in the woods, bothering my head about a maid that maybe cared not a snap of her fingers for me; while up there on the Moor the men of my blood and kin were waiting sword in hand for the onset to blow.

Twice I flung the pipe away and rose to get my horse and ride up the hill. Then I would see some petticoats come out of the house, Joan among them, and stand at the head of the steps. They would talk for a little, point, and look up to where now faintly down the wind came the wail of bagpipes. Then they would all troop into the house, and I would stop dead. Oh, my ladies, you do not know how Cumberland and his Hessians make war. If they win this fight—down I would sit again, fill another pipe, and fall to planning what should be done in that case.

So maybe two hours passed, and then I heard the first sound of cannon firing, and with it a great clamour among the rooks in the tree-tops. The ladies all thronged to the door, and servants looked out of the windows. Presently the dull, heavy thudding of cannon increased, and between the discharges, one could hear the distant blare of trumpets, the sustained, rapid beat of drums, and bending my head, I thought I could hear the pipes blowing the onset. It must have been that, for there broke out a great irregular splutter of musketry, and above all rose the wild fierce yell that could only mean highlanders charging.

Pacing hurriedly to and fro, I could see the smoke of battle drifting westwards. Again there came a great discharge of musketry and cannon, and a little while

after that the uproar died away in a dropping fire with an occasional cannon-shot.

The cawing rooks wheeled overhead, chaffinches twittered about me, and on the lawn and the steps by the main door the women clustered talking and listening. Aye, down here all was strangely quiet and still, but up yonder on the Moor, how was the day going? I stooped again to listen, thinking I could hear the noise of battle nearer at hand. Then I heard musket-shots, single, by twos and threes, and saw puffs of smoke bursting through the tree-tops on the slope.

I know not what time passed from then ; it might have been a quarter of an hour, when a highlander broke out of the wood across the lawn, then two more walking quickly and looking behind them. I ran out to meet them.

“ Don’t go up the hill, sir ! ” cried one.

“ What has happened ? ” I shouted.

“ We have lost the day. We are beaten,”

cried another. "Tell those women they had better be off out o' this!" and they slipped into the wood again, going towards the town.

Now I could see and hear more fugitives skulking and crashing in their haste through the trees and undergrowth. I waited a few minutes, but the firing came farther down the slope, and the noise of men running through the wood continued. I determined to wait no longer. Running across to the group of women, said I, "Ladies, I fear the day has gone against the Prince, and I would advise you to leave here without delay!"

The serving-maids never doubted me for a minute; at once they turned and ran crying into the house. But Joan and Miss Fraser of Foyers, and three other ladies looking at me in astonishment, cried all at once, "Surely not; you must be mistaken!"

"It may be," said I; but, turning, I pointed to several men in tartan who

shouted some warning to us as they ran across the open, "that does not look like victory! Come," I said, as with paling faces they turned from me to look at one another, and then at the woods above Culloden, "I know them, and I would not care to tell you what danger you stand in if any of Cumberland's German soldiers come this way!"

"But the Prince and all the rest of them; they will come here surely, Simon," said Joan.

"This is the very last place he would make for in the event of a defeat, believe me!" said I, beginning to lose patience.

"Oh Thighearn!"¹ cried Miss Fraser, "look at this!"

She pointed to two men half carrying a third between them, coming out of the trees. So blackened with smoke and powder were they, and hatless with hair unbound about their faces, it was not until they came to the foot of the steps we recognised

¹ Gaelic for "Oh Lord."

Ker and Fraser helping Malcolm, who had a wounded arm and a bloody bandage round his head. I gave one glance at Ker, and the gesture he made told me the day was lost.

"Let us go into the house for a minute," said I.

The servants had all gone. In a room a table was set for a company who would never dine there. Joan and Miss Fraser bandaged Malcolm afresh and we snatched a hurried mouthful of meat and wine.

"Now," said I, "if you will make ready, through the woods we go to Alturlie!"

"Why Alturlie?" asked Fraser.

"For the best of reasons. It is not in the line of retreat," said I.

Ker backed me with an emphatic nod.

"And what will we do about Malcolm?" asked Joan.

"We will think of that after. The main business at present is to get away from this house, where I shiver to think of the

danger we stand in, wasting time like this ! ” said I, leading the way to the back of the house.

Putting Malcolm on my horse and keeping in the shelter of the woods, we came to the Nairn road. A strange quiet hung over this neighbourhood. If there were any people about they were all hiding somewhere. Not a soul did we meet until we came to Alturlie, to find no one there but two elderly serving women and a half-witted lad who did odd jobs about the house, a sort of familiar of James Stuart’s, following him wherever he went. The women told us James Stuart had gone to Inverness the day before, and all the others had run away.

Malcolm was made comfortable in his bedroom. All the rest of that day we kept to the house, Ker, Fraser, and I spending the time in the tower, where we could see across the fields to the high road and beyond to Culloden, and talking of what had best be done.

“ Here, I take it, we lie on Cumberland’s rear, and for a day or two he will be taken up with what is in front of him, so for that time there is no great danger,” said I.

“ Na doot,” said Ker, “ but that will be the limit.”

“ What hopes are there of a rally ? ” I asked them.

Fraser shook his head, as also did Ker, saying, “ The word was passed that we were to fall back on Ruthven ; but, sirs, this business has been sair bauchled in the matter o’ looking ahead. Where ye gather men ye must hae meat for them, and powder and shot. It was the want o’ provender that lost us the day—that and nothing else ; and at Ruthven there’s neither bread nor powder and shot.”

As dusk began to fall we saw the English men-o’-war sail farther up the bay towards the mouth of the river—a manœuvre that appeared to have considerable interest for Ker, who spoke little, but never left the window, looking out on the bay

while daylight lasted. When night was come four of the ladies decided to walk on to Petty, where two of them lived ; but leave Alturlie Joan would not, and Miss Fraser said she would stay and keep Joan company.

All that night we slept in turns and spent the waking hours talking over plans to get away from Alturlie before the hunt was up for the rebels. But in all these plans, which in the end came to slipping through to the south and making a wide detour to the west, Malcolm, wounded and weak from loss of blood, was the stumbling-block.

Morning found us with no plan, save that of Ker and Fraser taking to the hills themselves after finding safe hiding for Malcolm.

We missed Ker for an hour after breakfast, and when he came back I saw he had something in mind. Said he, "I have taken the liberty o' shifting that boat o' yours, Miss Joan, round to the north side o' the Point."

He filled a pipe, and after a puff or two to get it fairly alight, he said, "Ye have been talking o' making for the west coast, but even wi' the lad fit to travel, I doot if I am fit for such a march mysel'. Ye see, friends, A'm a seaman first and last. In all my days I have never made a march o' twenty miles on foot; before I would make the half o' that ower the hills, ye would be carrying me. But, oot, there is a sweet bit boatie. Once past Chanonry—and I wisht the Lord had made it ten miles wide instead o' one—we might run through on the ebb to-night, and wi' this wind we would be at Findhorn ere morning!"

"And after that?" said Fraser.

"After that," said Ker, "I hae friends among the fisherfolk at Findhorn. We hae money, we could do what Mr. Simon here's fether and mine did, after Shirra-muir. I was for trying it last night," he said, "but the ships were too close in. Noo ye see them anchored farther up the

bay, and barring maybe a guard boat watching at Chanonry, the road is clear for us. But, if we are to try it, the sooner the better, before the news o' yesterday gets about the country, and the longer oor feet will be on the ground ! ”

Ker leaned back and relit his pipe. “ Ye need hae no fear o' the boat. She is well built ; for a guinea, in weather like this, I would sail her across the North Sea ! ”

“ Ker is right,” said I. “ You could not better his plan, and every hour you spend here will make it harder to get away ! ”

So it was settled the attempt should be made as soon as it was dark ; and that all things should be ready, I went out to tell the lad to bail the boat and fill up the water-keg. Not finding him about, I did this myself, and saw that her gear was in order.

It was getting dusk when all was ready. Bidding Joan and Miss Fraser stay in the house, we walked across the Point to the

boat, and by the time we got there it was almost dark and the tide beginning to ebb. We had made Malcolm comfortable, seated by Ker in the stern sheets. Bidding them farewell and God-speed, Fraser was in the very act of pushing off when we were startled by a woman's scream. There was a rush of feet to the edge of the bank above us, and a shout, "Halt there, or we fire!"

"My God, it's the red-coats; jump in, Simon!" cried Fraser, grasping my arm.

I shook him off. "Would you hang all? Take the oars, man, and pull for your lives!" I cried. Gathering all my strength, I gave the boat a mighty push and fell all my length into the sea. Struggling to my feet, another shout came from the bank, several muskets flashed. A woman shrieked, I heard Joan wailing, "Oh, father, you have killed Simon and Malcolm!" And on the heels of her crying that, a mad kind of scream that seemed to break in the middle.

Standing there up to my waist in the sea,

I saw through the gloom, against the sky, several soldiers rapidly reloading their muskets.

“Steady, men ; you there in the water !” a voice called out, “Surrender yourself or I give orders to fire.”

Behind me was the dark, empty sea, with, somewhere out of musket-range, the lessening sound of oars. For the present at least my friends were safe. The levelled muskets were twenty yards away. “I surrender,” I called out, and wading ashore, was instantly seized and disarmed.

“What have we here ?” called out the officer as we came up the bank, and found Joan standing beside a dark form stretched out on the bank.

“It is my father, in a fit, or maybe dead,” cried Joan. “Oh, Simon !” she cried again, peering into my face, “is it you ? why did you not go with them ?”

“Bring the prisoner along to the house,” ordered the officer, “and two of you help the lady to get her father home !”

Joan ran on ahead, and when we reached the house she was there to show us into the sitting-room, and direct the soldiers to carry her father up to his bedroom, where Miss Fraser and the women took charge of him.

Joan came back and stood anxious-eyed, looking from the officer writing at the table to me standing between two redcoats.

"Your name, sir?" said the officer, looking up.

"Simon Stuart."

"The old gentleman we carried home—I am sorry"—he bowed to Joan—"his name is Stuart; well affected, I know! Are you related to him?"

"His nephew," I replied.

"His nephew!" repeated the officer. "Why——" he broke off suddenly, looking sharply at Joan. My heart was sore for her, standing white-faced and miserable, twisting her fingers.

"And those men who got away in the boat?"

“ Just friends of mine,” said I.

The officer wrote it down. “ Dangerous friends for you, I am afraid ! ” And I thought it a strange turn in my affairs that he should be sitting there at my table, and I standing a prisoner in front of him answering his questions.

“ I regret, sir, it is my duty to march you into Inverness. You are wet ; there is no hurry for an hour,” said he, “ if you can dry or change your clothes ! ”

I thanked him for his courtesy, he made a sign, and escorted by the two red-coats, who turned with me stiffly, like wooden men, we followed Joan to Malcolm’s room, where she laid out linen and a suit that fitted me very well.

When we came down again Joan had food and wine on the table for the officer and me, and she saw to it that the soldiers had ale and bread and cheese. I believe she gave them money, as I heard the chink of coins.

I could not make the maid out, she was

so strangely silent and pale and tight-lipped. But when it came time for us to go, and the officer thanked her, muttering something about unpleasant duty—she pressed against me in the hall, and whispered, “Never fear you, Seum; I will go to McRimmon this night!”

I looked back and saw her for a moment standing in the door, black against the light, watching us march away. Then she turned and ran swiftly into the house.

IN the High Church I was lodged that night with many others, and what I saw there of ghastly wounds untended and misery among the prisoners I do not care to think on, far less put it down on paper. In the morning I was taken before some sort of drumhead court martial, and though not caught a rebel *in flagrante delicto*, I had been taken in the very act of helping rebels to escape. And at the end of half an hour's examination I could almost hear the ramrods of the firing party rattle.

Then matters took an unexpected turn. Among the officers who sat at that table was a tall, thin, ungainly man ; the air in the room being hot and stuffy, this officer had laid aside his white military wig, and I saw his hair was red. Though not the President of the Court, he had put

several questions to me. My attention was thus drawn to him, and also by the fact that he appeared to be the only man there who did not look upon the Jacobite prisoners as cattle for the slaughter. I was to remember this officer and meet him again under circumstances far beyond the thoughts of either of us at that moment.

He now drew a paper from his breast and gave it to the President, who read it, after which it was passed around the table. I heard the red-headed officer addressed as Major Wolfe.¹ The court looked on me with a new interest, something of the grimness gone from their faces, I thought, and I was ordered from the room.

While waiting under guard in another room, the officer who had taken me prisoner came in. "Is it the case, Mr. Stuart," said he in a low voice, "that you helped the Lord President when he was in some danger from the rebels?"

¹ Afterwards General Wolfe.

“ I was of some service to his lordship on an occasion, some months ago,” said I.

“ Then, Mr. Stuart,” said he brightly, and smiling, “ that will explain the deliberation of your case. I am glad to tell you that I feel sure it is in your favour, and that your life is in no immediate danger. It is likely you will be sent aboard the transport sailing to-night for Edinburgh, with other prisoners of importance ! ”

I could see Joan's hand in this, and doubtless McRimmon's. It turned out as the officer expected. Without being allowed an interview with any friends, in the afternoon, under a strong guard, I was marched with a score of others to the shore.

Eagerly scanning the faces of the people crowding the streets to watch us go by, passing the chapel yard, where, in the narrow street, the people pressed in upon us, I was cheered by the sight of Joan and McRimmon.

We marched at a brisk step, and it was

only for a moment I saw them. They were both smiling and waving their hands, and in the moment of passing a boy thrust a scrap of paper into my hand. "Keep your heart up, we go to see Duncan Forbes," I read as we marched along.

We were rowed aboard the transport lying at anchor at the river mouth, and sailed at night. The ship made a fair passage to Leith, and from thence, those of us who could walk, were marched straightway to the Castle at Edinburgh.

My memory serves me very badly at this point of writing. I have no clear mind of dates. Days passed into weeks in that dismal, nerve-breaking prison, that I learned was crammed with Jacobites. Naught could be heard day and night but the tramp of jailers and soldiers; the clanging of prison doors, the clash of arms, and harsh words of command.

Through a narrow slit in the thick walls of the little chamber over the inner gate, wherein I was jailed with half a dozen

other prisoners, it was our melancholy diversion to watch what passed below.

Prisoners marched in, and again parties of them marched out, all shackled and guarded, it was whispered, on their way to trial, and, what meant the same thing, execution, at the Assizes to be held at Carlisle.

Four times the prisoners in my cell went away, to be replaced by others, and at last I was left alone. And in all this time I saw no face but prisoners, or dumb, surly jailers. Neither did I receive any word from friends, or news of what the world outside was doing.

Though not a man to be easily cast down, as prisoner after prisoner passed beneath me, down that dismal gloomy slope between the high, frowning walls, I caught myself beginning to fear my end was not far off, and say, I will be the next. Every time the jailer's key clashed in the lock, I stood up expectant. And at night I would kneel on the stone seat by the

narrow slit, and look up at the stars and mutter, "Soon now; it may be to-morrow!"

Then came the change. One morning I stood to attention, as the door swung open. The jailer brought in my breakfast. A dish of minced collops, and white buttered bread, with a pewter pot of good ale, and a tass of brandy. In answer to my look of astonishment at the sight of this change of fare, he grinned and said, "Och, it seems ye hae guid freends. D'ye smoke a pipe? Wad ye be wantin' a barber?"

"I need both badly," said I, pinching myself to see if this was not a dream.

At the word he went out, and when he came back for the dishes with him came the barber and the pipes and tobacco.

Now this went on for three days; good food, with sometimes a bottle of excellent claret, and every morning the barber to shave me and dress my hair. But not a word of explanation could I get from him or the jailer. Then, on the fourth morning after the barber had gone, came McRimmon.

Thunderstruck, I stared at him, wondering if my eyes were playing me some trick. The old lawyer stood in the open door, smiling, and two great tears running down his cheeks.

“ Lord, Simon boy, here you are at last ! ” he cried, with a little catch in his voice, and the kindly old man came, and putting his arms round me, kissed me on the cheek.

“ Och, but this is the happy day ; let me sit down, laddie. I’m weak wi’ joy to see ye ! ”

I sat him down by the arrow-slit, and gave him the tass of brandy. “ No, no,” he cried, pushing my hand away, “ drink it yourself—weel, just a sip o’ it, there ! Thanks be to the Almighty, before another day is past we’ll crack a bottle together in a different place to this ! ”

“ McRimmon, how come you here ? ” I asked him, “ and what is your news ? ”

“ No news but what is good ! ” he chuckled, “ and as to how I come to be

here, I have my orders, and A'm no to tell that. But the news now. This morning, no later, ye go before Culloden and my Lord Loudon, here in Edinburgh. It's just a matter o' form, and you are a free man again."

"And Joan?"

"The last I saw o' the lassie," said he, wagging his head, "there was little wrang in her that canna be mended."

"And Malcolm and Ker and ——?"

"All safe and oot o' danger. All weel except your uncle, and A'm no losing any sleep ower James Stuart!" said McRimmon, pursing up his lips.

"D'ye know, Simon, it was yon auld deevil, and the other gallows bird, Dougal, that put the sodgers on ye at Alturlie, only the daft laddie didna tell them Malcolm was wi' ye. James Stuart didna know his own son was in the boat. Ah, weel, the Almighty has put His hand upon him. Ye're Uncle James has had a stroke, he is just a bairn again, and will never be

but a bairn till the Lord takes him. I think, Simon, seeing that Joan knows everything, we'll say no more about James Stuart ! ”

“ Never a word,” said I heartily. “ The Lord knows I have too much to be thankful for. I am not so sure, the way things have turned out, that I haven't something to thank Uncle James for ! ”

“ That's yoursel' that's speaking, laddie, and, my conscience,” he cried, lugging out and consulting a watch, in shape and size resembling a young turnip, “ it's eleven o' the clock. I must be going, boy, for there's them waiting on us that it'll no' do to keep waiting. Now,” said he, holding up his hand, “ no' another word till we meet again.”

He rapped on the door with his cane. The jailer let him out, and waving his hand to me, McRimmon trotted away in high feather.

When the door clanged behind him, I looked up at God's blue sky, and I kneeled down and I said a prayer my mother had

taught me at her knee when I was a bairn.

In a little while came the jailer, and marching out of my prison I was given up at the main gate to a corporal's guard. Such a common sight it was in the summer of the year 1746, aye, and for many a day to come, to see shackled and guarded prisoners marched up and down that thronged narrow High Street, that hardly a citizen turned to look at me going by. Only a few ragged urchins keeping step with us, and once or twice I caught the pitying eyes of a woman.

We halted at a house near the Church of St. Giles, a footman came out and gave the corporal a paper, whereupon the corporal barked at his men, and at the word they wheeled and marched away leaving me standing in amazement in the street. The footman signed to me to follow him into the house. He opened an inner door, ushering me into a large room, where at a table sat the Lord President and my Lord Loudon.

Duncan Forbes looked up at me with a reassuring twinkle in his eye. Loudon, very black and grim, said, "Well, Mr. Stuart, you may consider yourself a very lucky young man!"

"If I am, I believe I have to thank you gentlemen," said I.

"You have to thank someone else besides us," replied Loudon gruffly. "To cut a long story short, you are pardoned and a free man, but my friend, the Lord President here, has assumed the responsibility for your future good behaviour. I suppose, sir," he growled, "in gratitude, you are prepared to do something in return for being saved from the hangman?"

"Whatever a man can do!" I replied.

"Humph! Well, Culloden here has work for you in a field where too great a strain will not be put on your peculiar ideas of what constitutes loyalty to His Majesty King George!" He glared at me beneath his black eyebrows, and I bowed to both gentlemen, having the good sense to say nothing.

“ I told you a moment ago that you had someone else to thank. Yonder she is ! ” said Loudon, pointing his finger at a window across the room, and my heart gave a bound to see Joan standing there, half concealed by the heavy curtain.

“ That young lady rode every step of the way from Inverness, in company with an old lawyer—who had better amend his politics, for I have my eye upon him—to intercede for you. You may thank her, Mr. Stuart ! ” said my Lord Loudon.

“ That young lady requires a keeper ” —he wagged an admonitory finger at Joan— “ and so do you, sir ! ” said he, turning suddenly on me.

“ I think, my lord, ” said Duncan Forbes, rising from the table, “ we will leave them to arrange how such a condition can be best brought about. ”

I stared as both gentlemen walked to the door, and nodding their heads, and smiling very pleasantly, closed it gently behind them.

Then, turning to the window, I saw Joan coming from behind the curtain holding out her arms a little towards me.

And so the tale is almost told. For a time men thought there would be a rally of the clans after Culloden. But there was no rally. Fear makes men cruel as the grave, and the Government had got a great fright. When they learned that the Prince had abandoned his followers and fled to the hills they determined that this should be the last Jacobite rebellion, and took measures accordingly : such measures as make men sick at heart to read or hear about.

I served the Lord President in his labour of standing between the highlanders and the heavy hand of the Government. When that great man and true friend of the highlanders died, worn out by his terrible task, the Master of Lovat offered me a commission in his regiment of Fraser Highlanders.

I made the campaign of Quebec with my regiment, and there had the pleasure

of reminding and thanking the general for his kindness to me at the court martial. A musket-ball in the moment of victory ended General Wolfe's career. A musket-ball in the knee that day put an end to my soldiering. I am bothered with the wound in unsettled weather; in all else I am sound as a buck.

Highlanders will always have it that King Louis of France played them false in the '45, and I believe there was a note of vengeance in their yell of triumph that day when we drove Montcalm's battalions in rout from the Heights of Abraham.

As for the rest, we have visitors at Alturle this summer afternoon, and through the open window whereat I sit penning these last few lines comes with the scent of flowers, the laughter of children, and the murmur of voices.

Walking together on the lawn is my cousin Malcolm and his wife, Miss Fraser of Foyers, that was. On a seat by the bowling-green sits Janet, rosy and a

trifle more buxom, dandling Miss Joan Stuart on her knee. Deep in conversation with her is Captain James Ker, grown lusty these days. His ship is at Inverness, and he is spending his time with us until his cargo is stowed.

Like many another seaman, Ker talks of sailing the seas no more, but will give it up to go farming. If, as I am assured, Janet and he make a match of it, I will settle them at Clunes.

McRimmon, the hale and hearty old lawyer, needing no powder for his hair now, is very gravely engaged in settling a dispute between my little son and his grand-uncle, James Stuart, as to the lie of the bowls.

The tall lady looking on turns to the window, and catching my eye, with a quaint trick of raising her eyebrows, and a smile that shows a dimple in her cheek, beckons me out to the sunshine.

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